



No. CLXXXV.]

# Contents

[MARCH 1898

PAGE

**The Duenna of a Genius.** Chaps. VI.-IX. . . . . 377

By M. E. FRANCIS (Mrs. FRANCIS BLUNDELL),  
Author of 'In a North Country Village,' 'A Daughter  
of the Soil,' &c.

**'Memoirs of a Highland Lady'** . . . . . 404

By Mrs. ANDREW LANG

**Love's Life.** } By WALTER H. POLLOCK 420, 421

**The Heart of Memory.** }

**The Secret of the Willow-Wren** . . . . . 422

By W. H. HUDSON

**Suspense** . . . . . 430

By ADA SMITH

**The Typewriting Clerk** . . . . . 431

By E. A. SMITH

**The Season of the Year** . . . . . 447

By GRANT ALLEN

**At the Sign of the Ship** . . . . . 461

By ANDREW LANG

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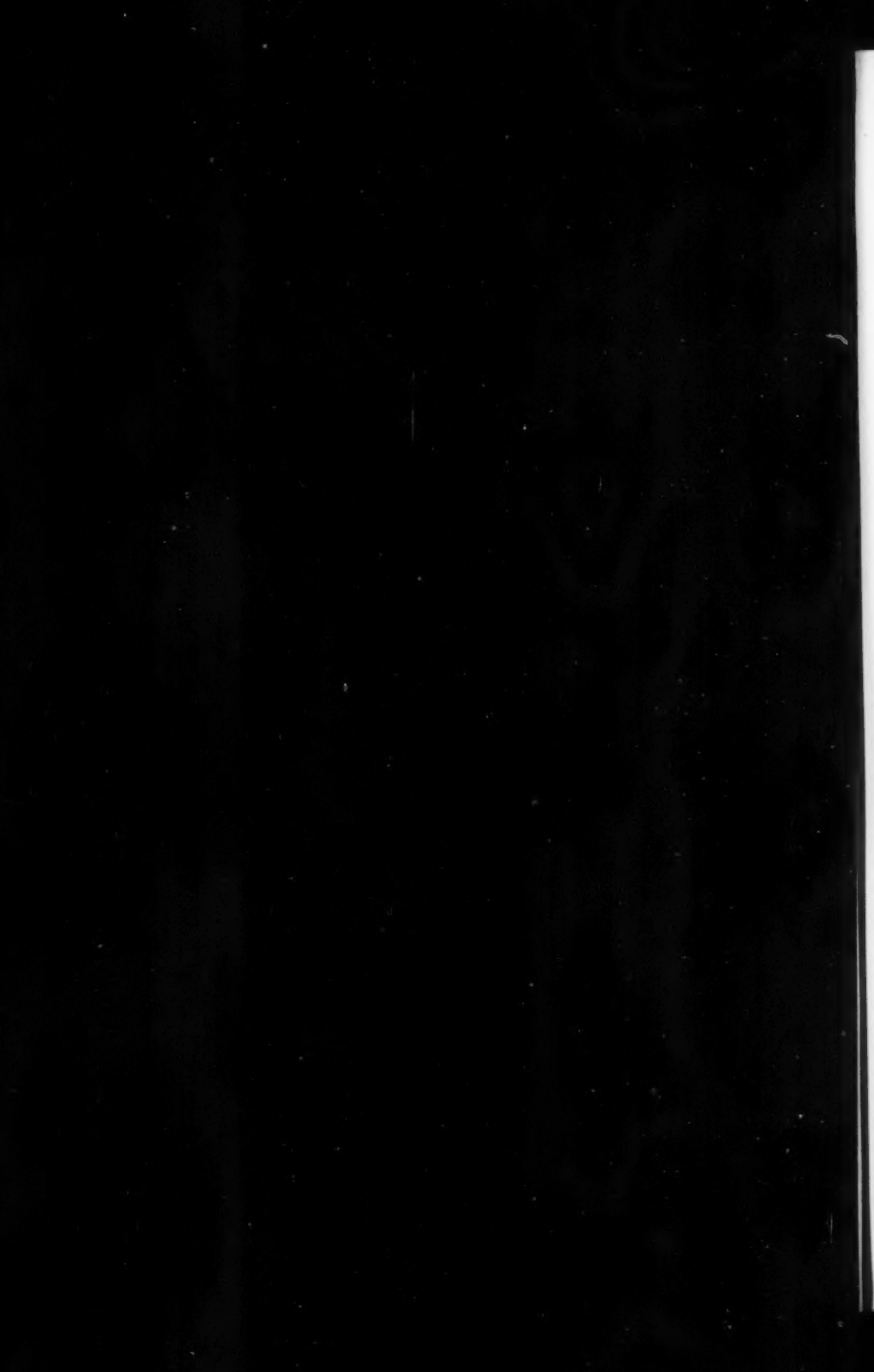
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# LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE.

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MARCH 1898.

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## *The Duenna of a Genius.*

BY M. E. FRANCIS (MRS. FRANCIS BLUNDELL),

AUTHOR OF 'IN A NORTH COUNTRY VILLAGE,'

'A DAUGHTER OF THE SOIL,' &c.

### CHAPTER VI.

#### ACCELERANDO.

SHORTLY before Christmas Sir John did come. Valérie had frequently expressed her hope that he would not observe the deficiencies of the oilcloth in the hall, and Margot had answered that it was not likely a young man would notice such things. Nevertheless Sir John did notice it, and he also remarked the odd medley in the little room upstairs, and observed with an inward smile, that was both tender and compassionate, Valérie's attempts at decoration. By this time the Madras muslin had got very limp and dusty, and the little bows of ribbon had begun to fade, and some of the plates had slipped from their wire fastenings. Sir John took note of it all; and, curiously enough, he found it not so much amusing as pathetic.

When the sisters came in, and saw him standing with his back to the fire, looking so big and handsome and prosperous—so smart, moreover, in his London clothes—they were both seized with shyness. But he was quite at his ease. After the first greetings he prepared to sit down on the chair nearest him; but Valérie sprang forward with a little shriek.

'Not that one,' she cried; 'we only keep that chair for ornament, one of the legs is not very solid.'

Looking up and meeting his laughing eyes, she laughed too; even Margot joined in, and the ice was at once broken. Indeed, it was impossible for anyone to remain on stiff terms with Sir John.

'John is so cosy,' his aunt had once said. It seemed an odd term to apply to this strapping young fellow, and yet it suited him. There was something so friendly and engaging in his manner, his smile was so winning and gentle, he managed in such an inexplicable way to convey to people the impression that he was deeply interested in themselves and their concerns, that he very soon was admitted to their confidence.

Perhaps the secret of this fascination lay in the fact that the interest which he expressed was genuine. Sir John Croft had doubtless many faults; he was indolent, somewhat careless, and perhaps a little too well pleased with himself and with life in general to study its serious side, but he had the kindest heart in the world. He was full of sincere sympathy for people in trouble, and would go out of his way to serve them; he did not mind sacrificing his own pleasure—and no man living was more keenly alive to wholesome pleasure than Sir John—in the interests of a friend. He was kind, generous, good-natured to all the world, and in some instances ludicrously tender-hearted. It was narrated of him that once, when boating at Cambridge, he had insisted on putting ashore that he might pursue and reprimand a woman whom he had seen beating a child. His companions had jeered and anathematised him, and the woman had indignantly protested that the child was her own.

'Then you don't deserve to have a child,' cried the young Mentor with flashing eyes, proceeding to deliver a severe dissertation on the duties and responsibilities entailed by motherhood. Then he had gone back to his boat and his laughing companions, leaving the woman aghast, and impressed in spite of herself. She had certainly never expected to be treated to a lecture on maternity by a young athlete in flannels.

Now as Croft, being at length provided with a trustworthy chair, chatted pleasantly with the two musicians, he unconsciously drew them out. He did not mean to be curious; they did not mean to be indiscreet, but somehow he managed during the course of an hour's conversation to find out a great deal about them. It was quite natural, for instance, that he should admire their piano. Valérie immediately told him that it had belonged to their mother.

'It was poor mamma's *dot*; that, and the pictures, and the writing-table, were part of the furniture of her room when she was a young girl. Her family sent them after her when she and my father left Paris.'

'Your mother was French, was she not?' asked Croft, with interest.

'Yes, she was a *Demoiselle de Renaissan*. Poor mother! I can just remember her—she died when I was eight years old. She was so pretty—so pretty, but so pale; and her little hands were so white and thin. She used to sit by the fire, sewing, sewing—and then one day she rolled up her work—it was a coat of papa's, I think, which she was mending—and folded her hands—so—you remember, Margot?'

Margot did not answer, and Croft saw that her eyes were full of tears.

'By-and-by,' continued Valérie, 'she got up and went out of the room, leaning upon the chairs and tables as she passed. Is it not strange? I remember that as if it were yesterday, though I cannot recall anything about the illness which followed.'

'Your sister is very like the picture,' said Croft, looking towards the portrait. Thence, indeed, the same soft eyes looked pathetically forth; and the perfect oval of the small face, the graceful lines of the slight figure, were exactly reproduced.

'Oh yes,' cried Valérie, with a sudden change of tone, 'Margot is just like mamma. She is thoroughly French; she loves *le décorum*; she likes everything to be *convenable*—do you not, Margot? And she has such little dainty ways! She is an aristocrat, is my sister, even when she dusts the room or makes a pudding. I call her *Mademoiselle la Marquise*.'

When she dusts the room or makes a pudding! Sir John did not like to think of Margot doing these things. He looked quickly at Valérie to see if she was serious.

'And do you, too, dust rooms and make puddings?' he inquired, in a tone which he could not prevent from sounding shocked and startled.

'Oh no; she will not let me do any work, though I should like it. I am born to it—I am a Bohemian, like papa.'

'Valérie, you are talking great nonsense,' said Margot, rather severely. 'Sir John will not be interested in these *détails de ménage*. It goes without saying that, as we only have one servant, she cannot possibly do all the work in the house, and it is equally needless to explain that your hands must not be

coarsened by any rough labour, lest they might lose their delicate touch.'

Croft glanced at the hands folded on Margot's lap; they, too, were delicate, slender, and refined—the hands of an aristocrat. He thought compassionately of those other hands about which Valérie had spoken, the little white hands so slight and transparent, which had gone on sewing, sewing, until at last they had been obliged to fold themselves and be at rest.

He would like to know more about this delicate French mother, the mother who had been a *Demoiselle de Renaissan*. De Renaissan! The name was curiously familiar to him—where had he heard it before? Suddenly he recalled Valérie's laughing words—'Mademoiselle la Marquise'—and memory returned to him.

'I knew a man called De Renaissan once,' he cried; 'he was Attaché to the French Legation at Vienna—a Marquis de Renaissan—I think his Christian name was Gilbert. I wonder if he is any relation of yours?'

'I think he must be a cousin,' said Margot, coldly. 'Gilbert? Yes, it was my grandfather's name. He is probably a cousin.'

'Our mother's relations do not acknowledge us,' put in Valérie quickly; 'they would not acknowledge her after her marriage. You must know, our dear little mother was not very wise. She made what her people thought one great folly—she ran away with my father, who was her music-master. Monsieur le Marquis de Renaissan, and all his high and noble family, could naturally never forgive the *mésalliance*.'

'Perhaps, Valérie,' said Margot, a little impatiently, 'now that monsieur is thoroughly *au courant* of all our family history, you will kindly change the subject.'

'I will change the subject,' said Valérie accommodatingly. 'We will talk about Sir John. Sir John, what have you been doing with yourself all these weeks?'

'I have been shooting,' said Sir John; 'and hunting,' he added quickly. He did not want to be thanked again for the game.

'Shooting and hunting,' repeated Valérie; 'I am afraid you have no *sérieux*.'

'On the contrary,' said Croft, 'I have come to town full of doughty resolutions. I am burning, longing, to know how to sing! I am impatient to begin my lessons. When may I begin?'

'When may he begin, Margot?' echoed Valérie, with a quaint, almost involuntary, imitation of his tone. 'You see, monsieur is so impatient! While he was killing his birds and jumping his hedges and ditches, he was in reality longing and burning to begin his—*solfèges*.'

Sir John laughed very frankly and merrily.

'There is a frost now,' he said; 'it is really a good time to begin—one will have fewer distractions.'

'Do you really want to learn?' inquired Margot, a little drily. 'You seem to have lived very comfortably hitherto, without knowing how to sing. Why should you begin now?'

'Because it is against my principles, Mademoiselle, to bury my talent in a napkin. I want to learn singing. I want to have three lessons a week—can you spare me three hours a week?'

'Certainly,' said Margot. 'In the morning or in the afternoon?'

'The morning, please,' said Sir John.

'Ah yes, it will be better in the morning. Then your afternoons will be free.'

'Mademoiselle,' said Sir John, with an air of mock solemnity, 'you persist in misconstruing my motives. I said the morning because I thought it sounded more business-like; I want you to realise how energetic I am. But, of course, I do not wish to interfere with your other pupils. By the way, have you got any new pupils since you were at Brackenhurst?'

The tone was so kindly, the eyes which he bent on Margot so full of sincere goodwill, that even she could not set down the question as impertinent.

'Yes, we have three or four,' she answered, with a smile. 'Our connection does not increase rapidly; but still it is increasing.'

'Three or four!' repeated Sir John, in a tone of vexation; adding, half to himself, 'What is my aunt thinking of? I believe she does nothing—morning, noon, or night—but potter about that blessed Institution. Tell me the names,' he pursued aloud.

Margot did so, still without resenting his pertinacity.

'Not one I know!' he exclaimed in a tone of annoyance.

'They are the most uninteresting children you ever beheld,' explained Valérie. 'How my sister has patience with them I do not know. Stupid little things, with red dumpy fingers and

their hair in pig-tails. Now, to make matters worse, they all have colds in their heads.'

'I am glad to hear that Mademoiselle Margot is patient,' said Sir John. 'She is so serious, so business-like, that sometimes I am quite afraid of her. If she were to get out of patience with me, I should lose my head altogether.'

Margot laughed.

'Oh, I shall be very patient—I will not scold you.'

Sir John rose to go.

'Then it is arranged. Shall we have our first lesson to-morrow?'

'Certainly, to-morrow, if you like,' said Margot.

As he put out his hand to say good-bye, she added, colouring:

'Since you think me so business-like, I must not forget to tell you that my terms are half a guinea a lesson.'

'Half a guinea?' said Sir John, looking a little blank.

'Is it too much?' asked Margot hastily.

'Oh no,' reddening in his turn; 'I—I thought—I quite expected it would be a guinea. I think it ought to be a guinea. I used to pay a guinea before, long ago, when I took lessons.'

In his heart he was ruefully reckoning the number of hours he would have to pass in studying solfeggios before this little couple could materially benefit. Margot, divining something of his thought, instantly stiffened.

'Probably your teacher was already firmly established, and could in consequence make what terms he chose. I have got my own way to make, and my charge is the same for all my pupils.'

'I think it ought to be a guinea,' persisted Sir John.

'I am very sorry,' said Margot, sharply. 'I can quite understand that it is not the style of thing to which you are accustomed; but if you choose to employ a struggling artist, you must take the consequences.'

She coloured hotly as she spoke. Her suspicions, which had been for a time allayed by the charm of Sir John's voice and manner, now rose up afresh, and she felt, moreover, irritated and resentful. Sir John was taking these lessons solely on their account; he was scarcely at the pains to disguise the fact. His motive, perhaps, was a good-natured compassion for their poverty—that was in itself humiliating; but might there not be something else in the background, something which would make his patronage yet more intolerable? For a moment Margot was tempted to

refuse this patronage altogether—to put an end, by a few hasty peremptory words, to Sir John's projected musical studies. But even as she opened her lips to speak, the young man turned towards her, extending his hand in farewell; and on meeting the frank honest gaze of his blue eyes she felt ashamed and remorseful.

Valérie meanwhile was apparently in the highest spirits, and chatted gaily about their visitor after he had left.

'Was it not strange that he should have known our cousin?' she cried, all at once.

'We told him too much about ourselves,' said Margot in a tone of vexation. 'It would have been better to have kept our family history to ourselves.'

'All the same, you were not sorry when I told him about our mother being noble,' returned Valérie. 'Do not deny it; I saw by your eyes that you were pleased.'

Margot blushed, ashamed of the little human weakness.

'At least,' she said, 'he will now have no doubt about our style of living! I am afraid, Valérie, he will not now believe that we have a *chef* and a *maitre d'hôtel*, since you told him that I dust the rooms myself.'

'*Au fait*,' said Valérie, 'I had not thought of it. But, my dear, once he has seen the oilcloth in the hall, it is impossible for him to have any more illusions about us. It will be amusing, his singing lesson to-morrow. I wager that he has a great big voice which he does not know what to do with.'

'*À propos*,' said Margot decidedly, 'you know you must not be in the room, Valérie. His lesson will not be amusing at all. If he wishes me to teach him, he must work, and work hard, without any interruptions. You must remain downstairs, or in your own room, my dear child, for many reasons.'

Valérie was disposed to rebel, but Margot was peremptory. 'I do not in any case much care about his coming,' she said; 'and if you will not take my advice in this matter, I will write and tell him that I cannot receive him as a pupil.'

She looked so determined that her sister knew she meant what she said, and gave in with a pouting protest.

'All the same,' she said, recovering her good-humour after a moment or two, 'I think you ought to have me to act duenna. It is not *convenable* for you to receive a young man all alone.'

'A duenna for me?' said Margot, with rather a sad little laugh. '*Il s'agit bien de cela.*'



She was two-and-twenty, but she felt herself to be old, old, and exceedingly wise ; she knew how to take care of herself, but Valérie must be kept out of harm's way.

Next morning, punctually at eleven, Sir John arrived. He proved to have a good baritone voice, which he did not in the least know how to manage.

'We shall have to begin at the beginning, I see,' said Margot.

Sir John assented a little ruefully ; he was feeling somewhat nervous, and was really, to a certain extent, in awe of this business-like little woman. Moreover, to tell the truth, the actual study bored him ; he was sincerely anxious to help his *protégées*, and, moreover, found their society pleasant and interesting, but he did not enjoy the singing of his *solfèges*. Margot did not intend that he should ; but she was quite determined that, though he took these lessons less for his own benefit than for hers and her sister's, he should have his full money's worth. So, for nearly an hour, Croft laboured wearily, making the same rather stupid mistakes over and over again, from sheer nervousness, and always expecting his determined little teacher to make some sarcastic comment. But Margot was very patient. She took infinite pains to make her meaning clear to him, and gently recalled his attention when, from time to time, it wandered. It was dreary work, but on the whole she was less bored than he. By-and-by Sir John, happening to raise his eyes, perceived that the little blue *portières* already alluded to were slowly creeping one towards the other, the cords being evidently drawn by someone keeping out of sight in the adjoining room. This spectacle did not tend to increase his equanimity, and, when Margot presently proposed that he should try over a very simple song which she thought might suit his voice, he suggested humbly that he had had enough for one day. Margot looked at her watch : 'You have still a quarter of an hour,' she said. 'You will have time to try this over—you will not find it difficult.'

She began the accompaniment, and poor Sir John obediently attempted the song, but he made a sad muddle of it, being much perplexed in his mind as to whether Valérie might not be listening behind those curtains.

'I think you can do better than that,' said Margot, for once almost losing patience. 'Try again, and keep time better.'

Croft began, but after a moment or two broke off with a laugh. Margot followed the direction of his eyes : there, from between the



curtains, a little dimpled hand was extended, which was marking the measure of the music with outstretched forefinger.

Margot rose from the piano with an indignant 'Valérie!'

Her sister, drawing the *portières* apart, revealed her laughing face and slight figure. 'I have not broken my word,' she said. 'I said I would not come into the room, and I have not—have I? But confess, Sir John, it goes much better when I beat time.'

'Very much better,' said Croft.

'Margot is so severe; she says I would interrupt if I came in.'

'You can come in now,' said Margot, 'the lesson is over.' She moved away from the piano, and stood facing Sir John, evidently expecting him to take his departure; but he had no such intention. Throwing himself into an armchair, he heaved a sigh of relief.

'I have ridden a runaway horse,' he said; 'I have interviewed a Cabinet Minister; I have once or twice been in imminent danger of falling over a precipice; but, upon my word, I do not think I have ever been through such an ordeal as this!'

Margot sat down, laughing. 'I thought you did not quite realise what you were undertaking,' she remarked; 'but there is no royal road to learning, you know. You must begin at the beginning, if you want to get on.'

'Oh, I don't mind beginning at the beginning,' said Croft. 'I only feel that I am a fool, and that you think me one.'

'You wrong both yourself and me,' said Margot, looking up with a charming smile. 'I fancy you will not want to take any more lessons.'

'You must have a very poor opinion of my force of will,' returned Croft. 'On the contrary, I mean to go on to the bitter end—even until I have mastered the intricacies of "*Comme à vingt ans*." Do you think I shall have to learn "*Comme à vingt ans*"? I will submit, but it will be a struggle.'

'Yes, yes; you must learn it,' cried Valérie, clapping her hands. 'Margot will spare you nothing, not even the little falsetto at the end.'

Sir John raised his eyebrows and groaned. 'Well, I am prepared for everything. Do you not think my beautiful dispositions deserve to be rewarded? Will you not play to me, Mademoiselle Valérie?'

Mademoiselle Valérie did play; and Sir John listened and applauded. It was not until Jane rang the little cracked bell

which announced the sisters' modest one o'clock dinner that he took his departure.

The lessons continued, Croft proving himself a docile and intelligent pupil; but at their conclusion he invariably considered himself entitled to an hour or so's repose in one of the shabby armchairs, and to the further relaxation of conversation with the sisters. It would have been quite impossible to keep Valérie out of the way, and Margot did not attempt it. Gradually, moreover, Valérie got into the habit of coming into the room during the lessons; and as she did not interrupt, and her presence had no visible effect on the pupil, Margot ceased to object. Nevertheless she felt a certain anxiety on the subject, and the rigid ideas of decorum which she had inherited from her mother were shocked by what she considered these slight lapses from propriety.

The curious friendship which had grown up between the three grew and strengthened, however, from day to day; even Margot felt an increasing regard for her pupil, and from time to time she actually found herself confiding in him, consulting him when any little difficulty occurred. It was impossible not to trust one who showed himself so full of friendly interest—whose attitude, indeed, towards them was such as might have been expected from a very kind elder brother. Never by word or look was there any hint of a desire to flirt with either of the girls. Never did he attempt to overstep the limits which he had apparently marked out at first for himself. He was not passive in his endeavour to serve them, but made strenuous efforts to secure for them more valuable patronage than his own. It was not, however, very much that a young man like him could do; people were not likely to select their daughters' music-mistress on his recommendation.

'I thought you knew nothing about music?' some one would say; or, again, 'Mademoiselle Kostolitz? Who is Mademoiselle Kostolitz? I have never heard of her. Julia and Mary are taught by a pupil of Hallé. Yes, I know Hallé's playing was cold, but then his style was so finished. One can always tell a pupil of Hallé's, &c., &c.'

Sir John did, nevertheless, manage to do the sisters Kostolitz one very good turn.

He persuaded a friend of his, a lady well known for her smart and successful parties, to give an *At Home*, at which Valérie and her violin were the chief attractions. This time the entertainment was completely successful. Valérie received an ovation which

satisfied even her, and, moreover, made several valuable new acquaintances. This entertainment would, they hoped, lead to more of the same kind; she would get known, and would be brought into contact with other musicians and with music-loving people. Meanwhile one or two pupils who might really be expected to do her credit had, as a further consequence, accrued to Margot.

## CHAPTER VII.

## SCHERZANDO.

TIME went on; Christmas came, bringing a fresh consignment of flowers from Sir John, and the New Year, on which day his *étrennes* took the form of bonbons. Valérie laughed, and munched, and thanked the donor with such pretty childish glee that he was more charmed with her than ever. Margot's gratitude was more soberly expressed, but she too was pleased.

One day, at the close of the lesson, when they all had been discussing music, Sir John chanced to mention a certain famous violinist who was on the morrow to give a farewell concert before leaving England. It happened that the sisters had never heard him, and they now expressed much regret and longing.

'We heard of this concert too late,' said Margot; 'we could not now get places, even if we were to try. They say people stand for hours, waiting for the doors to be opened.'

'I would gladly stand for hours, days, to hear him!' cried Valérie, her little face changing, as it always did, when she spoke of anything touching her art.

'You would catch cold, if we tried to-morrow,' said her sister. 'You shall go another time, when Mr. — comes back to England.'

'We may be dead by then,' returned Valérie, still in a tone of passionate regret. 'Fancy, if we were to die without having heard the greatest violinist in the world! They say he is the greatest, do they not?'

'Upon my soul,' said Sir John abruptly, 'I think you have more charm.'

'Oh, oh,' cried Valérie, 'what an exaggerated compliment!' But she was much delighted all the same.

About half-past two next day a hansom dashed up to the door of No. 28 Pitt Street, and Sir John Croft pushed past the startled

Jane, who had in haste and astonishment answered his violent ring, and rushed upstairs.

'Where is your sister?' he cried, finding only Valérie in the drawing-room. 'Look here, I have managed to get two tickets for you—for the recital to-day. They were sent back at the last moment. But you must make haste; it begins at three. You had better take my hansom and start off at once. Where is your sister?'

'Oh *malheur!*' cried Valérie, turning quite white, while tears of disappointment leaped out on her cheeks, 'Margot has gone to Wimbledon for the afternoon! One of her pupils has a cold, and could not come here for her lesson. Oh, this is too much! I would have given anything, *anything*, to have gone. It is just like my luck!'

She was actually sobbing. Sir John was deeply distressed. 'Is there no one whom you could persuade to take you?' he asked.

Valérie shook her head. 'No, no; we do not know anyone whom I could ask at such short notice; we have no acquaintances except our pupils and their relations. I think you are our only real friend. Oh! Sir John'—struck by a sudden thought—'could not you take me? Would it bore you very much?'

Her face, beaming with the sweetest, shyest smiles, and, moreover, alight with hope, was turned towards him; she had involuntarily extended her hands. Sir John coloured to the roots of his hair: would he not be the veriest coxcomb to resist such pleading? Yet the poor little thing was so ignorant of the ways of the world, that it might be, on the other hand, unchivalrous to allow her thus to transgress the laws of convention.

'Nothing in the world would give me greater pleasure,' he said, rather gravely, after a moment's pause; 'but I fear your sister would not approve.'

'Oh, as to that,' cried Valérie joyously, 'she will not know until we come back, and I do not mind her scoldings.'

'But I do,' said Sir John; 'I should not like her to think I had taken advantage of her absence to persuade you to do a thing which she would not consider *convenable*.'

'*Pour ça,*' said Valérie, 'it is I who persuade you, and you will be very unkind if you refuse. I care nothing for the *convenable*, *moi*. Bah, you will not eat me! If you do not come with me, I will go alone; and I have never, never, *never* gone out alone in my life. I shall assuredly lose myself, or perhaps somebody will carry

me off. Nevertheless, I *will* hear —. Ah, it is maddening to think how much precious time we are wasting—we must miss the first piece, as it is. Now I am going. Will you come with me, or will you not?’

Of the two evils it was certainly better to consent to escort the harum-scarum little creature than to suffer her to go alone. His promise once given, Valérie flew upstairs; and presently returned, having donned cape and hat—a very pretty little hat with coquettish rose-coloured plumes.

Sir John wished in his heart it were not quite so noticeable, and that Valerie did not look so radiant and so lovely.

Going downstairs, he proposed calling a four-wheeler, but Valérie scouted the idea, which would, she said, involve the waste of valuable time, and skipped into the hansom before he could make any further protest. Once they had fairly started and were flying along wood-pavements and whisking round corners, with a clear cold air blowing in their faces, Sir John’s scruples vanished. Looking down at the sparkling little face beside him, and listening to Valérie’s chatter, he gave himself up to enjoyment.

Seeing her so entirely happy, why should he care for Mrs. Grundy? Could it hurt Valérie any more to sit by his side in a hansom, or in a concert-hall, than in the little drawing-room at Pitt Street? He knew himself to be incapable of taking advantage of her confidence by the utterance of a word which her sister might not hear. Meanwhile it was amusing and exhilarating to watch the little creature’s pleasure; and when, later on, they were established in their places in St. James’s Hall, he was more than amused and interested. He felt it to be a privilege to watch her absorbed face, marking how the play of the mobile features varied with the changes in the music. At times the whole of her artist soul seemed to shine in her eyes; he could even see her hands working, the fingers curving themselves involuntarily, as though they too itched to handle bow and strings. Then her comments during the intervals—how lucid they were, how clever, how full of insight and appreciation, how free from any tinge of envy or jealousy!

Sir John looked and listened with ever-increasing respect and admiration; there seemed to be two people in Valérie, and just then she was all the artist, the very great artist, who might possibly some day take precedence of the famous brother to whom she was now listening.

But when they were once more seated, side by side, in the hansom, the little Valérie of Pitt Street reappeared.

'What a day we have had—ah, what a day! It has been glorious. I only wish it were not now over. I am glad the streets are so crowded and we must go so slowly—there is a block—do you not call it so? I am glad; now we can look about at all these lovely shops. Ah! what a cake-shop! Do you see that cake-shop, with all the beautiful cakes and bonbons in the window? Do they not look inviting?'

Sir John looked at the shop in question—a certain fashionable pastrycook's in Oxford Street.

'I believe you can get tea and chocolate in there,' he said. 'Would you like to come in and have a cup of chocolate, and some of the little cakes you are so fond of?'

'Cakes with pink sugar on the top,' cried Valérie, ecstatically. 'Do you know those little cakes? They are delicious. Oh, thank you; I should like it of all things.'

Croft thrust his cane through the aperture at the top of the hansom, and desired the driver to stop. Valérie alighted gaily, and almost ran before him into the shop. She was at once supplied with a cup of chocolate, but it took some little time to satisfy her with the precise description of pink sugared cake on which she had set her heart. Sir John laughed as he watched her wandering up and down the counter, scrutinising and rejecting; at last, with a cry of joy, she pounced upon the object of her search.

'These are they—these are they! Yes, you may give me three or four.'

Holding aloft the plate which bore her treasures, she made her way back in triumph to Croft's side. Leaning on his elbow, he looked on, laughing, while she disposed of her cakes, leaving the sugar to the last in every case, and then nibbling it very slowly. Meanwhile she and Sir John chatted together in Hungarian; Valérie criticising, with great freedom and equal drollery, the different people who came in.

'There is a very tall lady,' she cried, as she regretfully swallowed the last minute mouthful of crumbling pink sugar; 'and, not content with being tall, she carries her head so high—so high. And she has got such plumes in her hat, it is as though she wanted to sweep the ceiling. And her nose—oh, she is carrying her nose the highest of all! Ah, do you know, it is as if I had seen her face before.'



Sir John looked round. 'It is Lady Rosamond Gorst,' he said. 'What a nuisance!'

Lady Rosamond walked straight up to the counter, followed by another lady, with whom she conversed over her shoulder; they ordered chocolate and selected eatables. Sir John meanwhile had been impatiently watching Valérie whilst she buttoned her gloves; he was particularly anxious that they should make their escape before Lady Rosamond recognised them. Her ladyship was, however, perfectly aware of their presence; and when they arose to go, she turned and confronted them.

'How do you do, Sir John?' she said. 'I hope you enjoyed the concert. I saw you there. — was in form, wasn't he? But I always think recitals are deadly things. How do you do?' coldly to Valérie, on whom she further bestowed a little impertinent nod. Valérie responded by just such another salutation.

'I do not think you know my friend Mrs. Miller,' pursued Rosamond, again turning to Croft. 'Beatrice, let me introduce Sir John Croft.'

Mrs. Miller, after the usual amenities, proceeded to speak of the concert, asking Sir John various questions as to his impressions and descanting at length on her own.

'Sir John's criticisms will be valuable,' remarked Lady Rosamond. 'I hear, you are developing into quite a musical genius,' she pursued, addressing him. 'I am quite amused at your sudden passion for singing. No one was even aware till now that you possessed a voice.'

'Oh yes, I have got a voice,' returned Croft, tranquilly; 'but I never have had time to cultivate it before. Now I can roar you as gently as any sucking-dove. Seriously, I am making great progress—am I not, mademoiselle?' turning pointedly to Valérie, whom the other ladies seemed disposed to ignore. 'By-the-bye, Mrs. Miller, I don't think you know Mademoiselle Kostolitz.'

Mrs. Miller acknowledged the introduction by the slightest possible movement of the eyebrows.

'Mademoiselle Kostolitz's sister is kind enough to give me singing lessons,' pursued Sir John; 'and, though you may sneer, Lady Rosamond, I intend to do my teacher great credit. Some day you may be very glad to hear me.'

In another moment or two he had managed to get Valérie and himself out of the shop, without any appearance of undue haste. He had done his best to carry off things easily, but he

was in reality intensely annoyed at the encounter. Lady Rosamond was the last woman in the world whom, under the circumstances, he would have wished to meet. Even at Brackenhurst she had taken no pains to conceal her dislike of the sisters Kostolitz—a dislike grounded no doubt on the jealousy of Sir John's attentions. But to-day she had been so insolent in her manner to Valérie, her tone, even to Sir John, had been so full of covert sneers, her glances so significant, that he felt not only vexed, but seriously perturbed. Lady Rosamond had a sharp and malicious tongue, and, unfortunately, a wide circle of acquaintances, and these acquaintances formed part of the same set to which Sir John had made such strenuous exertions to introduce Valérie and Margot. There was no knowing what construction might not be placed on the innocent escapade of the afternoon, nor what harmful consequences to the poor little musicians might not result therefrom.

Sir John was very silent during their homeward drive, and even Valérie did not chatter so gaily as before, her remarks being chiefly confined to sarcastic comments on the demeanour of Lady Rosamond and her friend.

As they drew near Pitt Street Sir John experienced a further sinking of the heart; Margot was to be faced, and just now the thought of facing Margot was a little formidable.

Directly the hansom drew up before the house the door opened and Margot's figure appeared outlined against the narrow gas-lit hall.

'*C'est toi !*' she cried. 'Ah, how frightened I have been !'

'How could you be frightened?' said Valérie. 'Did not Jane tell you I had gone to the concert with Sir John?'

Leaping down lightly, she ran up the steps, followed by Croft.

'I must explain,' he was beginning; but, looking at Margot's face, he saw that there was to be no explanation that day. After one glance, in which anger and disdain were mingled, she drew Valérie into the house and closed the door. Standing alone on the steps without, Sir John uttered a low rueful whistle, and slowly sought his hansom again.

Meanwhile Margot motioned to Valérie to go upstairs, and followed her in absolute silence. When they reached the drawing-room, she turned her sister round and looked at her sternly.

'Valérie,' she said, 'how is it possible that you could have done such a thing?'

'Eh, what a face !' cried Valérie; 'you frighten me ! It is all



the fault of that stupid child with the cold in her head. If you had not had to go to Wimbledon, you would have gone with me, and there would have been no question of Sir John.'

Margot's face changed. 'It is true,' she said, in a low voice. 'I ought never to leave you; I never know what may happen when I am away. Yet, Valérie, you who know so well how anxious I am about you, how could you have taken such an advantage of my absence? But, indeed, I do not blame you the most. It is Sir John Croft—he whom I trusted, whom I thought our friend.'

'Margot, Margot, do not be so tragic! What an affair about nothing! Listen, and I will tell you all about it.'

Thereupon Valérie, half laughing and half crying, proceeded, with many digressions, and talking very fast, to narrate the events of the day,—how Sir John had got the tickets, and how, as no other *chaperon* was forthcoming, she had asked him to escort her; how kind he had been; how he had taken her to a *café* and treated her to chocolate and cakes. At this point Margot sank into the nearest chair, her face even whiter than before.

'A *café*!' she repeated. 'O Valérie, is it possible that you asked him to take you to a *café*?'

'No, no,' returned Valérie triumphantly, 'he proposed it himself! I assure you, Margot, he asked me if I would like to go. And do you know,' she continued, with animation, 'Lady Rosamond Gorst was there. You remember *cette grande blonde* who was at Brackenhurst, and whom we hated so—she was there, with a friend, a Mrs. Miller—a lady with a very big hat and a very big mouth. And do you know, Margot, I think she was quite jealous when she saw me with Sir John. She said, "I saw you at the concert;" with such an air, if you could see! And she did not want to speak to me, though Sir John would not have me left out of the conversation. And she began to laugh at him in such a disagreeable way about his taking lessons, and having suddenly developed a passion for music.'

'*Bon, il ne manquait plus que cela!*' said Margot, half to herself. She sat, leaning her head upon her hand, her face averted, so that her sister could not see it.

'You are not angry any more, are you?' inquired Valérie, stooping towards her and kissing her pretty soft hair. 'You see, it was all quite simple.'

'Oh yes, it was all very simple,' returned Margot, in a strangled voice. 'No, no; I am not angry with you any more. You will always be a child, my poor Valérie! You are my baby—'

my dear baby, and I must not leave you alone ; that is all. Now go and get ready for supper.'

Valérie ran upstairs, humming to herself a fragment of one of the airs she had heard that afternoon. She was delighted at having escaped so easily.

Margot meanwhile sat quite still, staring at the fire ; her face was set, and there was a sparkle in her eyes other than the reflection of the glowing embers. All at once she sprang to her feet with a passionate gesture of wrath and scorn. '*Lâche !*' she cried.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

### MOLTO FURIOSO.

WHEN Croft approached the Kostolitzes' house at his usual lesson-hour next morning, he was conscious at first of some little trepidation ; nevertheless, he reflected that Margot had now had time to cool down. Valérie would most certainly have explained to her exactly how the expedition had come to pass ; it was impossible, he thought, that she could really resent an act which had, after all, been so kindly meant. He had taken great trouble to procure those tickets, and had it not been for Margot's accidental absence she would have been as much overjoyed and as full of gratitude as her sister. His conscience, indeed, smote him somewhat when he remembered the halt at the pastrycook's ; that injudicious proceeding was, however, due to a weakness which Margot, so well used to her sister's fascinating ways, could not judge too harshly. But he felt that it had earned a reprimand, which he would take very humbly and penitently ; then she would forgive him, and all would go well again.

This happy confidence deserted him, however, when he entered the drawing-room and approached Margot, whom he found waiting for him alone. She was standing by the chimney-piece, and though she turned round when he entered, she did not speak nor advance to meet him. He walked quickly across the room, and, as soon as he stood beside her, extended his hand. She did not take it. He looked into her face ; it was very white, and the eyes were stern.

'You are angry, I see,' he said, 'but I refuse to quarrel with you—yes, even though you will not shake hands. Come, you may say all the hard things you like—I will confess that I have

deserved them; but afterwards you must forgive me. I will bear my punishment, but we must be friends.'

'Friends!' echoed Margot, bitterly; 'you have never been our friend—I see it now. While we have been trusting you, you have been taking advantage of our foolish confidence, our ignorance; you have been amusing yourself, playing with my poor little sister. Yesterday you showed yourself in your true colours. Heaven knows what harm Valérie's folly may not bring upon her; but yet I—I can hardly regret it—at least I now know what you are.'

Poor Sir John's breath was completely taken away; he had told Margot to say what hard things she pleased, but he had never expected anything quite so hard as this. He turned rather pale, and leant back against the chimney-piece, too much astonished for a moment to speak. At last he exclaimed, with something like a laugh:

'I wonder what on earth you think I have done! Surely your sister has told you——'

'That she alone was to blame?' interrupted Margot, with angry sarcasm. 'Oh yes, she told me, and I know exactly how much of her story to believe. If you had chosen to prevent her going, Sir John, you know you could have done so. And was it not you, you yourself, who proposed her going into that *café*?'

'It really was,' answered Sir John, laughing outright. 'I actually did commit that enormity. And now, my dear Mademoiselle Margot'—assuming his usual kindly tone—'do not let us make mountains out of molehills. I am sorry, genuinely sorry, that I did take her there, because I see it annoys you so much; but let me assure you it really was not such a very dreadful thing to do. The whole expedition was not at all such a piece of impropriety as you think. Lots of girls, and very nice girls too, go to picture-galleries and exhibitions and concerts with young men nowadays, and nobody thinks anything of it. Yes, they even drive in hansoms and go into cake-shops!'

'Sir John,' said Margot, and her eyes almost seemed to shoot forth flames, 'I think it ungentlemanly and ungenerous of you to speak in that tone, remembering as you do our relative positions. You know very well that, though there might be nothing remarkable—so you say, at least; to me, I must own, it seems strange—in your taking about one of the young ladies whom you meet at your aunt's house or elsewhere in society, it is quite another matter when my sister is the person in question. Any of your

friends who may have seen you yesterday driving with her, or in the concert-room, or in that cake-shop, must have made very unfavourable comments. Indeed, Lady Rosamond Gorst did make comments and throw out hints—she will probably talk about the matter, and people will think—they will fancy——’

‘What can they think and fancy?’ interrupted Sir John, becoming as red as before he had been pale. ‘Twist the matter as you like, what can they say? The great artist, Mademoiselle Valérie Kostolitz, whose sister is good enough to give me lessons, is so kind as to come with me to a concert. Well, is there anything remarkable in that?’

‘We will not discuss the matter any more,’ said Margot. ‘As to the lessons, I blame myself for having been so foolish as to consent to them. The whole question of those lessons has been a farce from beginning to end. You have made use of your pretended wish to study music as an excuse to obtain access to this house; you have not even disguised from me that the lessons themselves bore you, and evidently you jest about them with your friends. Everyone knows that it is only a pretext—that you are simply amusing yourself with my little Valérie. Ah! my God, how could I be so blind! I allowed you to come, I encouraged you, I—I myself exposed the child to this! I, who always swore to protect her—to care for her!’

The last words were almost inarticulate; she paused, wringing her hands. Sir John had at first stood aghast, too much confounded at the torrent of fierce accusations, and, moreover, too profoundly hurt by them to attempt to interrupt her; but he now spoke, gently and firmly:

‘Mademoiselle, you wrong me very much; but I hardly know how to make you believe that you do. I can only assure you most solemnly, on my word of honour as a man—you told me just now, you know, that I was not a gentleman; but you will admit, I hope, that I am a man—on my word of honour, then—on my oath, if you will—I am absolutely incapable of the motives you impute to me. I have never felt anything but the most genuine and admiring interest in your sister and yourself. As for those lessons——’

‘The lessons will now cease,’ said Margot, quickly. ‘After the escapade of yesterday, the mere fact of your coming to the house would excite further gossip. Oh, it is all very fine, Sir John, for you to talk of the sincerity of your friendship. If you really respected Valérie, if you were a true friend, you would not

have exposed her to the *mauvaises langues* of your acquaintances, you would not have run the risk of causing a scandal about her. No, no ; it is better to have an end of it all—you must not come here any more.'

It was a moment or two before Croft replied : a variety of emotions were struggling in his mind, the predominant one being anger.

By-and-by, however, he took his elbow off the chimney-piece and made a step nearer Margot ; there was a look in his face which she had never seen before.

'I refuse to accept that fiat of yours,' he said, with quiet determination. 'If my presence is unwelcome to you, I shall not force myself upon *you* ; but I have done nothing to render myself unworthy of your sister's friendship, and as long as she is willing to receive me I shall continue to come.'

'You will come, in spite of what I have said ?' asked Margot. She spoke quietly and firmly also ; the two were measuring their strength.

'Yes, I will come from time to time to see Mademoiselle Valérie, and to inquire if I can in any way be of service to her. I refuse to be forbidden the house, as though I had done a dishonourable thing. I have always tried to be her friend—and yours ; I will continue to be her friend as long as she will let me. If I know her, she will not cast me off.'

'Sir John,' said Margot, very gravely—she was not angry now, but intensely in earnest—'though I have been disappointed in you, I do not think you quite mean what you say. You do not realise what the consequences would be. It is quite true that Valérie would probably continue to see you, in spite of anything I could say to prevent it, but she shall not run any further risk ; of that I am determined. If you insist on forcing yourself into this house, I will take her away. Think well before you drive me to this. Ah !' she cried, with gathering passion, 'we have struggled so hard—I have had to work, to slave, to make even this poor little home for my sister—all my life I have had so many difficulties to contend with—it has been such uphill work. And now—now, when we had just managed to escape from our grinding poverty—when we were just able to breathe, to hold up our heads—when there even seemed to be a glimmer of prosperity——'

She broke off. Sir John might have asked through whose intervention this state of things had been chiefly brought about, but he was too proud as well as too generous to reproach her.

'Nevertheless,' pursued Margot, 'cost what it may, I will prevent Valérie from being trifled with. If you continue your visits here, Sir John, I shall be forced to take her away. We must begin life again in a new place—we must start all over again.'

Sir John interrupted her with a hasty gesture. 'That is quite enough,' he said. 'I did not, as you say, realise that your views on the subject were so very strong. Do not be afraid—I shall never trouble either of you again.'

Margot was surprised: she had not expected this sudden capitulation. She began to murmur something in a half-apologetic tone, but he cut her short.

'There is no more to be said, I think. Good-bye.'

This time she held out her hand, hesitatingly, but he would not see it. With a bow he turned towards the door—in a moment he was gone.

He ran down the stairs hastily, his heart burning with wrath; he let himself out of the house, and began to walk away, still in hot indignation; but after a few paces he turned, half involuntarily, and looked back at the house. Poor, little, shabby house! After all, he had spent some very happy hours there. Was it his fancy, or did he really see a figure standing in the drawing-room window—a small white face pressed against the pane?

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## CHAPTER IX.

### CON TRISTEZZA.

VALÉRIE had been careful to keep out of the way on this particular morning. Margot had not again alluded to Sir John, but her sister had very shrewd suspicions that the forthcoming interview would be a stormy one; she judged it therefore more prudent to wait in her own room until a treaty of peace should have been concluded. When the lesson was over, she meant to come down as usual. But though she strained her ears for the welcome sound of Sir John's *solfeiges*, it was in vain; at last her curiosity got the better of her self-imposed discretion, and, running downstairs, she stood for a moment on the landing outside the drawing-room door. Absolute silence reigned in the room within; she could not even hear them talking. She opened the door very softly, and looked in: no one was in the room but Margot, who lay



extended in an armchair with her eyes closed. At the sound of the opening door she sat up quickly. Valérie, in astonishment, hastened to her side.

'Where is Sir John?' she cried, sharply.

'Sir John is gone,' said Margot, turning, if possible, paler than before.

But Valérie was not at first disposed to take the matter seriously.

'You and he have quarrelled, I see,' she said, laughing; 'and, to punish you, he has gone away without taking his lesson. There, there, *voilà une affaire!* To-morrow he will come back and say he is sorry.'

'No, no,' returned Margot, with a groan. 'O Valérie, he will never come back!'

'Ah, *pour ça*, he will though, if I know him,' cried Valérie, still laughing incredulously. 'He may swear by all his gods that he will not, but he will! But what can you have said to make him so angry?'

'Oh, he is gone for ever. Do not deceive yourself,' sighed Margot. 'It was I who told him to go, and he has taken me at my word.'

'You—told him to go!' ejaculated Valérie, crimsoning to the temples; then, flying at her sister like a little fury, she seized her by the shoulders and actually shook her.

At another time Margot would have laughed, but now she only looked miserably into Valérie's face.

'Valérie, I did well,' she pleaded, as soon as the other had relaxed her avenging grip. 'Oh, my dear, you must see that I did well. Listen, my darling; you are so innocent that you do not understand ——'

'I understand very well,' interrupted Valérie fiercely. 'I understand that you have sent away our best friend, our only friend, a man who has loaded us with benefits, a man who has every day, almost every hour, given us proof of his kind and delicate thought of us. Was it not, after all, out of pure kindness that he did take me to that wretched concert? Oh, how I wish I had never heard of it! It was I who made him take me; he did not want to, he said you would not like it. I begged and implored and insisted; I said I would go by myself, if he did not come with me; and at last he consented.'

Margot looked at her, her eyes growing large with pain and a kind of terror. Had she, after all, been tilting at windmills? Was this enemy whom she had so valiantly overthrown no enemy

after all? Were these misdeeds of his, which during the long wakeful hours of the preceding night had assumed such gigantic proportions, not indeed so very heinous?

'And for this you have sent him away!' pursued Valérie, hot tears of wrath and grief springing to her eyes; 'because he spoiled me a little, just as you have always spoiled me—because he did what I asked, and gave me a few cakes for which I did not ask, but which I hinted so very strongly that I liked, that he could not help seeing I wanted them. And for these *bagatelles* you have quarrelled with him—with our good friend! Margot!' with a little shriek of anger, 'I cannot understand how you could have been so wicked, so ungrateful! Have you no heart? Do you not feel what you have done?'

'Valérie, Valérie,' murmured Margot, speaking breathlessly in her tremulous haste, 'it is you—it is you, who do not understand. It has been a mistake all along; it was an impossible friendship. It was—not right for us—two girls, living alone, to receive him as we did—I ought never to have allowed those lessons. Surely, Valérie, even you could see that he simply made the lessons an excuse for coming to the house.'

'Well, and if he did,' returned Valérie, stoutly, 'I think it was very kind of him to want to come. I am sure there is not much in this house to attract him.'

Margot in desperation seized her sister's hands and held them firmly. 'Do you not see, child, that *you* were the attraction? He came because you amused him—because he admired your pretty face, and was taken by your pretty ways. He is, after all, a man of the world. He knew very well what people would say about these visits of his—do you suppose, my little one, that Lady Rosamond was the first person who has made insulting remarks about his intimacy with us? No, indeed! What she said has opened my eyes; but you may depend that other people have made similar insinuations before. But what did he care? He has shown us plainly enough that he did not mind to what risks he exposed you, nor how much his conduct might injure your reputation, so long as he gratified his own selfish whim.'

Margot spoke vehemently, almost violently; it might be she wanted to convince herself as well as her sister. Valérie snatched away her hands, and stood for a moment without speaking.

'Margot,' she said at last, 'if you can believe such things, I am sorry for you. I do not believe them; I do not doubt our



friend. O Margot, is it possible that you can think of him—think of his nice, good face, and suspect him?’

The words conjured up a vision of Croft’s familiar face, which never during the months that the sisters had known him had worn for them any other expression than that of kindness. Even to-day, under Margot’s accusations, wounded though he had been, and angry, he had not suffered traces of these feelings to appear. Only in the eyes, those frank merry eyes, there had been reproach when he had said, ‘I have always tried to be her friend and yours.’

O Heavens, if it were true! If his face had not belied him, if he had really been as faithful and sincere as his words implied, what a monster of ingratitude was she! But no, no, she had not been mistaken; it was surely right and wise to act as she had done. It was the only course to pursue, the inevitable thing! Even Valérie’s emotion helped to prove the greatness of the danger which she had averted.

‘No need to tell me,’ she said, in a low voice, after a pause, ‘that he has a charming face—everything about him is charming. Little sister of my heart, do you not see that on this account I feared for you the more. It has often crossed my mind that, being thrown with him so much, you might grow to care for him and be made unhappy. Yesterday, when I saw you so pleased and excited, it gave me a kind of shock. I began to think—I began to fear.’

Valérie stared at her blankly for a moment. ‘What do you mean?’ she ejaculated.

‘I mean, that you might grow—to love Sir John. And—oh, my Valérie, I know you!—if he did not love you in the same way, and it would be foolish to expect it, you would break your heart.’

Valérie suddenly burst out laughing; then, marking Margot’s white, astonished face, she paused, wiping her eyes.

‘You really have the most extraordinary ideas,’ she said. ‘I do not know what fly has stung you lately, you are so *exaltée*—so full of *lubies*. I to love Sir John!—*l’aimer d’amour*, you mean? What are you thinking of? No, my dear; when I love, it shall be a great artist, a man whom I could feel to be my master, who would draw out of me the best that is in me, and yet whom I should always feel to be greater than myself. As for poor Sir John, I ask you, is there anything about him that one could love and revere like that? I loved him very much as a friend; yes, as a brother, as a *very nice* brother; and I loved him, too, because

he was always so gay, so bright, so amusing—he brought sunshine into the house whenever he came. The days when he did not come were blank days. Now all the days will be blank—everything will be dreary and stupid, just as it was before we knew him! O Margot, Margot, you are very unkind and cruel’—here she began to cry again piteously—‘cruel to me as well as to him. You have taken all the brightness out of my life; nothing is left but dulness, and monotony and hopelessness.’

Margot’s lip quivered, but she did not speak.

‘Everything is hateful,’ went on Valérie, jerking out the phrases between fierce little sobs. ‘What is the use of studying, of practising, when it ends in nothing? I detest this house—this little, dreary, tiresome house, where everything is so ugly and so common—I hate London, with its fogs and its smoke, and its grimy streets—I hate your stupid little pupils—I hate everybody and everything except Sir John—and now you have driven Sir John away!’

Valérie had gone on in a crescendo of indignant complaint, expecting every moment to be interrupted by Margot. But Margot did not interrupt her; she did not attempt to justify herself; she listened very quietly until Valérie had reached the climax, and then she burst into a passion of tears.

Tears were rare with Margot, and Valérie had never seen her weep like this before—so despairingly, so bitterly. In a moment all her own grievances were forgotten, and she flung herself at her sister’s feet.

‘My little Margot, my darling—no, no, you must not cry so! Ah, how wicked I have been to torment you like this! O Margot, Margot, I beg of you, do not cry any more.’ Margot pressed her hands against her face and wept on, the tears trickling through her fingers.

‘My beloved,’ went on Valérie, remorsefully, ‘it is I who am a monster, an ingrate, a horrid, horrid, wicked, perverse little wretch! Ah, how could I wound you so when you are so good to me? But you know I do not mean what I say; you know me, my Margot; you know I really love this little house, our home, and that you and I are always happy together.’

Margot slightly shook her head and continued to sob convulsively.

‘Then I will cry, too,’ said Valérie, sitting down on the floor and burying her face in her sister’s lap. ‘I also will break my heart. Ah, Margot, my little mother, my beloved patriarch, you

know that I adore you, and yet you will not believe that I am sorry.'

Her acute distress roused Margot, and she made strenuous efforts to overcome the tumult of her grief; but she could not all at once succeed. Her heart was too sore; the desolation of her spirit too complete; her nerves, moreover, too entirely unstrung, to permit of her regaining her self-control for a considerable time. But she wept less violently now, and flung her arms round Valérie, so that their touch conveyed to her the tender forgiveness which she could not speak.

Valérie sat hugging her sister's knees, and every now and then rubbing her own hot cheek against them with a caressing kitten-like movement, murmuring meanwhile broken phrases of endearment :

'Ah, my *Bon-papa chéri*, you have forgiven me, have you not? I adore you—I adore you! I will never grumble again—everything you do is right.'

Poor Margot at this smiled faintly through her tears; but she felt in her sad heart that everything was wrong.

(To be continued.)

## ‘*Memoirs of a Highland Lady.*’<sup>1</sup>

SINCE the days when Dorothy Osborne wrote her delightful letters to her rather unresponsive lover, and revealed the fact that young ladies of the seventeenth century led a life of greater independence and liberty than they are generally given credit for, no more fascinating picture of contemporary manners has been given to the world than the *Memoirs of a Highland Lady*, née Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus.

Its charm lies, not in literary style or in the relation of stirring events, for the Peninsular War and the Battle of Waterloo make as little impression on her as the Great Plague did upon Pepys, but in the absolute lack of pose, and the candour with which she states her opinions. If she finds Sir Walter Scott personally uninteresting, and his novels dull, she does not scruple to say so. If Oxford as it was in 1810 strikes her as monotonous, and the ladies composing University society eminently undistinguished, she does not attempt to conceal her impressions. In short, in telling the story of the first thirty-three years of her long life Miss Grant says what she thinks, and not what she *ought* to think.

The Grants of Rothiemurchus, as every Scotchman knows, are a very old family, living on the banks of the Spey, with the Grampians for neighbours. Joan Beaufort was their direct ancestress on one side, while on that of the spindle the writer of the *Memoirs* cherished the tradition that her mother's family name of ‘Ironside’ owed its origin to the epoch of the great Edmund. In any case, the Ironside estate had descended unbroken from the times of the first Norman kings, and its remote situation in a corner of Durham had preserved it alike from border raids and baronial rapacity.

A numerous connection of Ironsides, married and single, resided in and about Houghton-le-Spring, and wooing must have been ~~an~~ embarrassing proceeding carried on under such a

<sup>1</sup> London, 1898. John Murray.

multitude of critical eyes. Miss Jane was, however, exempted from this fiery ordeal, for her successful suitor was introduced to her during a visit the young lady paid to her sister, Mrs. Leitch, wife of a Glasgow merchant. No doubt Mrs. Leitch speedily spied out the state of affairs, and hastened to inform the family of her suspicions; but letters were rare in those days, and Jane must have escaped a great deal of the advice and scrutiny she would have had to undergo at home.

As far as we can learn, no positive engagement seems to have been entered into. John Peter Grant was as yet only his uncle's heir and a law student, and was not, therefore, in a position to support a wife. He was, besides, of a cautious turn, and resolved not to commit himself hastily, for even when he was called to the Bar, and succeeded to Rothiemurchus—two events which happened simultaneously—he did not by any means fly to throw himself at the feet of his beloved. On the contrary, he spent a year in Edinburgh society and in visiting Irish friends, in order, as his daughter naïvely remarks, 'to make sure of the fidelity of his attachment.' This being ascertained, he set out for Houghton-le-Spring, and in August 1796 the young people were married.

The next four or five years were spent by the Grants in Charlotte Square, Edinburgh; but in 1802, when Elizabeth was five, William four, and Jane two, we find them occupying a house in Bury Place, London, Mr. Grant having from motives of ambition exchanged the Scotch for the English Bar. His children were devoted to their father, in spite of some Spartan principles which caused them a great deal of suffering at one period of their lives; but even from their earliest moments they appear to have been able unconsciously to separate the man himself from the principles he held. If in many respects he was a stern disciplinarian, in others the doctrines of Rousseau and Madame de Genlis had influenced his views; but, apart from either, he was the most delightful playfellow ever known, and when he went away, says his daughter, 'all our joy went with him.'

Like most education between that given to the learned young ladies of Queen Elizabeth's day and the systematic one bestowed on our own daughters, the lessons learnt by the Grant children were in general set tasks, often above their comprehension, pattered off to their mother or governess, with explanations neither given nor demanded. With idle or stupid children, no doubt, the matter ended here, but with intelligent ones, like the Grants, the method answered well enough, for as Elizabeth observed, 'our

brains were not over-excited,' and as they all of them (except the dunce, Mary) could read fluently at three, they had the rest of the day in which to study what they liked. Pages of *Geography by a Lady*, columns of spelling, were soon committed to memory, and then they were free to read any books they could understand. At eight or nine Elizabeth picked up in her mother's dressing-room the *Letters* of Lady Hertford and Lady Pomfret, which kept her spellbound, and when she knew them almost by heart her father gave her the *Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. For lighter moments she had the *Parents' Assistant* and the *Arabian Nights*.

In 1803, when Elizabeth was barely six and William not yet five, they were taken twice to the theatre. The first play was the *Caravan*, at Sadler's Wells, and children were, as was natural, rather bored with most of it. John Kemble was the lover, 'and a very lugubrious one he seemed to be. The actor that delighted me was a dog, a real Newfoundland, trained to leap into a cataract and bring out of the water, *real* water, a doll representing a child. They could not persuade me the doll was not the real child; I thought it dead, drowned, and cried and sobbed so violently I was hardly to be pacified—not till all the audience had been attracted by the noise. The other play was the *Busy Body*. Bannister in all sorts of scrapes, doing mischief continually from over-officiousness, hid in a chimney, discovered when least welcome, &c., a collection of *contretemps* that fidgeted and annoyed much more than they amused me.' In fact her state of mind was exactly that of the child who, provoked at the persistent confusion of two members of the pantomime between 'orphan' and 'often,' rushed to the front of the box and exclaimed in shrill despairing accents, 'Don't you understand? He means 'of—ten and of—ten!'' Training is necessary to some extent to appreciate the conventions of the theatrical world.

As frequently happens on this very ill-regulated planet, 'the best laid schemes of men and mice gang aft agley,' and Mr. Grant may have been flattering himself on the success of his favourite educational theories when he suddenly received a rude shock. 'It was an idea of his,' relates his daughter, 'that we were better unguided; characters self-formed were to his mind more brave, more natural, than could ever be the result of over-tutoring. We were, therefore, very little directed in our early days. We were always informed of our wrong-doings, sometimes punished for them, but we were very much left to find out the right for our-

selves.' This system of education, so strikingly opposed to that of Mr. and Mrs. Fairchild, answered well enough as long as there was some grown-up person in the house, who would keep an eye on the children. Except for hearing them spell and taking them to concerts, their mother does not appear to have troubled much about them. She was often ill, and a good deal absorbed in her books, and though beautiful, clever, and energetic when she chose, as is shown by the way she acquainted herself on her marriage with the Highland 'Home Industries,' Mrs. Grant was in general rather an indolent person. Her place in the household was for some years supplied, as far as her children went, by an aunt and her own maid, but when these kind and tactful women married, there was no one to stand between the wind and the severity of the parental crazes. 'One mode was applied to all: perpetual fault-finding, screams, tears, sobs, thumps formed the staple of the nursery history from this time forward. . . . Our nursery breakfast was ordered, without reference to any but Houghton customs, to be dry bread and cold milk the year round, with the exception of three winter months, when in honour of our Scotch blood we were favoured with porridge. Had we been strong children this style of food might have suited us, but we inherited from my father a delicacy of constitution demanding great care from our infancy. In those days it was the fashion to take none; all children were alike plunged into the coldest water, sent abroad in the worst weather, fed on the same food, clothed in the same light manner. From the wintry icy bath Aunt Lissy had saved us; our good nurse Herbert first, and then Mrs. Lynch, had always made us independent of the hated breakfast; but when they were gone, and the conscientious Mrs. Millar, my mother's 'treasure,' reigned alone, our life was one long misery. In town, a large, long tub stood in the kitchen court, the ice on the top of which had often to be broken before our horrid plunge into it; we were brought down from the very top of the house, four pair of stairs, with only a cotton cloak over our nightgowns, just to chill us completely before the dreadful shock. How I screamed, begged, prayed, entreated to be saved! half the tender-hearted maids in tears beside me; all no use. Nearly senseless I have been taken to the housekeeper's room, which was always warm, to be dried; then we dressed, without any flannel, and in cotton frocks with short sleeves and low necks. Revived by the fire, we were enabled to endure the next bit of martyrdom, an hour upon the low sofa, so many yards from the



nursery hearth, our books in our hands, while our cold breakfast was preparing. My stomach entirely rejecting milk, bread and tears generally did for me.' Being hungry and thoroughly miserable, they soon took to lying, if they thought anything was to be got by it, and matters were in this condition when their father returned from an electioneering campaign in Morayshire. 'The recapitulation of all our offences drove us to despair, for we loved him with an intensity of affection that made his good opinion essential to our happiness; we also dreaded his sternness, his punishments being *à la* Brutus, nor did he ever remit a sentence once pronounced. The milk rebellion was crushed immediately; in his dressing-gown, with a whip in his hand, he attended our breakfast—the tub at this season we liked—but that disgusting milk! He began with me; my beseeching look was answered by a sharp cut, followed by as many more as were necessary to empty the basin. Jane obeyed at once, William after one good hint. . . . Whatever was on the table we were each to eat; no choice was allowed us. The dinners were very good: one dish of meat with vegetables, one tart or pudding. How happy our dinner-hour was when Aunt Lissy was with us! a scene of distress often afterwards! My mother never had such an idea as entering her own nursery . . . ' On one occasion Jane, then about five, rejected cold spinach at every meal for thirty hours and then gave in, and was ill all night in consequence.

For some reason that is not clearly explained this terrible state of things did not last long. 'Aunt Mary' Ironside, afterwards the wife of the Master of University, seems to have managed to check the severity of Mrs. Millar. At any rate, it was after her marriage that nursery discipline became sterner than ever. At last the children could endure it no more, and laid an ingenious trap for their tyrant. Often as their father flogged them, corporal punishment was strictly forbidden, no matter what the provocation, from anyone else. Nurse Millar transgressed this order frequently, but took care to time her punishments when Mr. Grant, a very methodical man, was absent from his dressing-room, which adjoined the nursery. It was agreed between the two eldest victims that William was to watch for the chance of his father coming upstairs at 'uncanonical' hours, and warn his sister, which he accordingly did. Elizabeth instantly became peculiarly irritating, and was rewarded by several hard slaps on the back of her neck. Loud yells followed; then more slaps and screams, which increased in agony till Mr. Grant rushed in upon



the scene. 'I have long suspected this, Millar,' he said. 'Six weeks ago I warned you. In an hour you leave this for Aviemore.' And she did. Sad to say, the younger children, whom she had always indulged—she was one of those women who only care for infants—turned upon their sister, and even William declared that Elizabeth's temper had been the cause of half their woes. Perhaps it was; but it was not to be expected that she would admit the fact. 'Kill the next tiger yourselves,' she said indignantly, and withdrew from their society for half a day.

Strange as it may appear, the children's devotion to their father never swerved for all his whippings, and they still loved no playfellow like him. 'Sometimes he was an ogre groping about for prey, which when caught he tickled nearly into fits; sometimes he was a sleeping giant whom we besieged in his castle of chairs,' but whatever the game 'it was always charming, and redeemed all our troubles.' It was he, apparently, who chose the books they should read, took interest in their pursuits, and settled their various masters. The Grants were great upon masters. As some people cannot pass a fortnight in a town without flying to a dressmaker, the Grant family were unable to spend a month even in a foreign city without taking lessons in music, dancing, and Italian. Their intermittent governesses—selected, not very successfully, by Mrs. Grant—were only intended to teach the children the rudiments of what would now be classed as 'English,' and to keep them in order. This was not always very easy. The children were clever, critical, and (in spite of the food and the floggings) very undisciplined. They promptly detected the shortcomings of their rulers, and decided on their own line of conduct. 'She is a fool; I sha'n't mind her any more,' Elizabeth at six remarked of her first instructress, and on this principle they all acted through life. Driving over Flodden in the year 1812 on their way North, their father seems to have asked them what event they connected with the name. "'Miss Elphick' (the new governess) 'will tell us, I am sure,' said Elizabeth, 'for I had taken her measure at once and knew she knew less of Flodden Field than I did. "Decidedly not," said my father. "Take the trouble to hunt out all the necessary information yourself. You will be less likely to forget it. I shall expect the whole history a week after we get home." Whether, suspecting the truth, he had come to the rescue of the governess, or that he was merely carrying out his general plan of making us do all our work ourselves, I cannot say, and I did not stop to think. My head had begun to arrange its ideas. *The Flowers*

of the *Forest* and *Marmion* were running through it. "Ah, papa," I said, "I need not hunt; it's all here now: the phantom, the English lady, the spiked girdle and all. I'm right, ain't I?" and I looked archly at the governess, who, poor woman, seemed in the moon altogether.'

Whether in London, Edinburgh, or their beloved Rothiemurchus, a wonderfully pleasant and rational life was led by these children, who ran wild about the country in their pink gingham frocks and coarse straw bonnets lined with green. There was none of the incessant fuss and supervision which we are accustomed to associate with the existence of little girls a hundred years ago, based possibly on the immortal work of Mrs. Sherwood. They had that best of educations, free access to books, and on the lengthy journeys between London and Rothiemurchus their father took care to provide a good travelling library suited to all ages. On the occasion of the visit to Flodden it included Goldsmith's *History*, *Animated Nature*, *Adèle et Théodore*, *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, the first three of Scott's poems, and *Childe Harold*, which had just appeared, and roused even the prosaic Elizabeth to enthusiasm. Then they were habitually taken to the best concerts and plays—pictures none of them seem to have cared for—and, lastly, they were continually thrown in the society of those whom force of character or intellectual gifts rendered interesting. One of their nearest neighbours at Rothiemurchus was the celebrated Duchess of Gordon—Burns's Duchess—whose taste for lively as well as intellectual people had by no means passed away with the days when she or one of her sisters rode a sow down the High Street of Edinburgh. 'Half the London world of fashion, all the clever people that could be hunted out from all parts, all the neighbourhood from far and near, without regard to wealth or station, flocked to this encampment in the wilderness' (which was literally a cottage) 'to enjoy the free life, the pure air, and the wit and fun the Duchess brought with her to the mountains. . . . When the Duchess had miscalculated her supplies, or more guests arrived than she could possibly accommodate, the overplus, as a matter of course, came over to us. All our spare rooms were often filled, even to the many beds in the "barrack," and at Kinvara (the name of the cottage) shakesdown in the dining-room and the sofas in the drawing-room were constantly resorted to for gentlemen who were too late for a corner in the "wooden room," a building erected a short way from the house.'

In spite of railways and telegraphs and daily steamers, this happy state of things has not entirely passed away. 'Where did we all sleep?' is a question which many of us still have had occasion to ask each other, for Highland houses have not yet ceased to be hotels, and the most charming and hospitable hotels in the whole world.

Some of these guests were, of course, mere 'visions' as far as any acquaintanceship went, but with others, such as Mrs. Thrale and her daughters, the Grants maintained permanent relations. Then there were the Duke of Manchester, son-in-law of the Duchess, 'the most beautiful statue-like person that ever was seen in flesh and blood,' and her own son, the wild and fascinating Marquis of Huntly. Another of the visitors was an Irish Mr. Macklin, who 'played the flute divinely and wore out the patience of the laundry-maids by the number of shirts he put on per diem. He was 'a very clean gentleman,' and took a bath twice a day, not in the river, but in a tub, a tub brought up from the wash-house, for in those days the chamber apparatus for ablutions was quite on the modern French scale. 'Grace Baillie was with us with all her pelisses, dressing in all the finery she could muster, sometimes like a flower-girl, sometimes like Juno; now she was queen-like, then Arcadian, then *corps de ballet*, the most amusing and extraordinary figure stuck over with coloured glass ornaments, and by way of being outrageously refined. Well, Miss Baillie coming upstairs to dress for dinner, opened the door to the left instead of the door to the right, and came full upon short, fat, black Mr. Macklin in his tub! Such a commotion! we heard it in our schoolroom. Miss Baillie would not appear at dinner. Mr. Macklin, who was full of fun, would stay upstairs if she did; she insisted on his immediate departure; he insisted on their swearing eternal friendship.' The gentlemen were in fits of laughter, the ladies much shocked, and the only person with any sense seems to have been Miss Ramsay, the governess, who remarked that if Miss Baillie had just shut the door and held her tongue no one would have been any the wiser.

These friends came to them, as it were, by inheritance; but we get besides glimpses of others whom chance threw in their way. During a short visit to the little Durham watering-place of Seaham, the children came across Miss Milbanke, the future Lady Byron, who lived for part of the year in a little villa close by their inn. At Oxford Elizabeth gazed with awe and disapproval at Mr. Shelley, 'the ringleader in every species of mischief'—credited,

however, with much 'mischief' for which he was not responsible. At Ramsgate, where a house was taken in 1811 for Mrs. Grant's health, they found themselves living next the 'Baroness d'Ame-land,' otherwise the Duchess of Sussex, with whose son and daughter the little Grants soon became intimate. These children bore the name of D'Este, one of the surnames of the Duke, and were called by their friends 'Prince' and 'Princess,' though their mother, apparently a person of great good sense, never spoke of them but as 'my boy' and 'my girl.' Princess Augusta began the acquaintance on the downs, and continued it over the paling that separated the two gardens; and Mrs. Grant shortly received a hint that a visit next door would be acceptable. Very soon Jane, everybody's favourite, became almost a fixture in the 'Duchess's' house; and Mr. Grant was consulted by the great lady in the many difficulties that were constantly arising in her life. She was a clever and accomplished woman, very fond of children, and to amuse her own got up a private performance of *Macbeth*, with the Princess as Lady Macbeth, and Jane, who scored a brilliant success, as her lord. The actors being so few, the parts had to be more than doubled; but that only added to the interest of the affair: the Duchess painted one scene, which did duty for all, and Mr. Grant, who had been a pupil of Stephen Kemble, was stage manager.

Nothing strikes us more in reading these Memoirs than the slight bar which then separated class from class in Scotland. No doubt this was to a great degree the outcome of the clan system. Members of a clan were looked upon as one family; their interests were identical, their intercourse natural; there was no condescension on one side, and no awkwardness on the other. Hence the manners were good, for where there is neither self-consciousness nor assumption, politeness springs up of itself. If, as often happened, the sons of a family went away to India or elsewhere, rose from the ranks and got their commissions, they came back quite unspoilt to see their old homes and their humble friends. Where, indeed, would have been the use of pretensions, when all the clan (which composed their world) knew who they were and all about them?

Another curious fact is the footing of absolute equality on which illegitimate children were placed, even by those who would seem to have most cause to resent their existence. These *petits accidents de l'amour*, to quote a French actress, were tolerably numerous everywhere at that day; but in Scotland, at any rate,

they had no reason to complain of their treatment. Annie Grant, the 'accidental' daughter of Mr. Grant's half great-uncle, was one of these, and her history is far more romantic than the wildest efforts of modern fiction. As a child she was seen by Mrs. Grant of Rothiemurchus, bare-footed and bare-headed, attending the parish school, and herding the cows in her leisure moments. After her father's death Annie was transplanted into the household of one of the Grant relations, to help in the housekeeping and do anything she was wanted. Here she remained till Mrs. Grant died, when she was sent to a good school in Forres by the Lady of Logie. But the poor girl must have felt that death had a special spite against her, for not long after she lost her protectress, and was taken up to London by her guardian, Mr. Grant of Rothiemurchus. By him she was apprenticed to the Misses Stewart, fashionable dressmakers in Albemarle Street. Her position, however, affected her friends as little as did the circumstances of her birth. Everyone seems to have loved her, and there was no end to the houses open to her for her holidays. And when, on the retirement of the Misses Stewart, Annie came to live at her guardian's in Lincoln's Inn Fields, an era of happiness—and goodness—set in for the Grant children. With Elizabeth she read Goldsmith, Robertson, Rollin, and Shakespeare, also some good novels and Miss Edgeworth's fashionable tales. Later, Annie went out to India, married a General Need, played, as her husband's position demanded, the great lady at Cawnpore, and finally came home to pick up her old threads in a country house not far from Nottingham. A strange career, truly, for a bare-footed Scotch lassie!

As the years passed on, electioneering expenses grew heavier, and money became scarcer and scarcer. In 1812 they went North for good, and henceforth 'did a season' in Edinburgh instead of one in London. In the spring of 1815 Miss Grant was pronounced grown up, and the best dressmakers in Inverness and Glasgow were entrusted with her outfit. Hitherto, in spite of the six years difference in their ages, Elizabeth, Jane, and Mary had all been dressed alike. Their common frocks were pink gingham or nankeen, their best ones white calico, with fine straw bonnets lined and trimmed with white. Over the frocks they wore tippets to match, unless for a change their mother gave them silk spencers, 'of any colour that suited her eye.'

It was in the conscribed elegance of such garments that Elizabeth and Jane passed the summer of 1810 at Oxford, their arms

carefully placed within each other before setting out to walk, that they might promenade gracefully through the town, after the manner of Isabella Thorpe. These clothes Elizabeth now set aside in favour of trimmed cambrics and muslins, and for occasions of state a lilac-checked silk gown. Sashes, up till now a forbidden luxury, were 'tied at one side in two bows with very long ends.' The dinner gowns were muslin—pink, blue, and white. Of course the petticoats were scanty and the waists short, while only natural flowers were considered 'becoming a young woman.' Elizabeth's best bonnet was of white chip trimmed with white satin and blush roses, and her best spencer of pink. We do not know how she wore her hair at this time, but a few years after she mentions that, on the advice of some Brussels girls, she arranged drooping ringlets in front, while the rest of her hair, which reached to her ankles, was coiled up in plaits. And to this style she always kept, whatever the fashion.

'Where maidens are fair many lovers will come;' and after her *début* at the Inverness Gathering—a meeting which owed its birth to the Duchess of Gordon—Elizabeth had her full share of admirers. Considering the way in which she had been brought up, and the amount of society and gaiety in which she had mingled from a baby, it is rather difficult to picture the young lady 'frightened out of her wits' at her first dinner-party at Kinvara; but, at any rate, her shyness (which one cannot help suspecting to have been *de circonstance*) had quite worn off by the time she danced her first reel.

It was during her first season in the 'Northern Athens' that the romance occurred which saddened Elizabeth's life for many years, and turned her, at eighteen, from a girl to a woman. From her account of the circumstances we get many curious glimpses of contemporary manners and customs, which confirm the impression made by Mrs. Somerville's *Memoirs*, that girls in those days were by no means as strictly kept as is commonly supposed.

The hero—we are not told his name—was the only son of a rich professor, and heir to a fine property on the Tweed. He was a great friend of William Grant's, though several years his senior, and was soon on a footing of real intimacy with the whole family. The young ladies on both sides exchanged calls, and were welcomed at each other's houses, but the elders remained aloof—a proceeding which strikes us as well as the young Grants as very odd; but if anyone expected the crisis, nobody took any pains to



avert it. When it came, the outcry was loud, and the marriage was pronounced impossible. Why, nobody knew, or at any rate would say; till at length, after a miserable period of tears, exhortations from family friends (Rothiemurchus characteristically kept out of the way in London), and a secret correspondence on the part of the young people, the knot was cut by the hero's mother. This sensible woman one day called on the girl and explained that the two fathers had been in their college days the dearest of friends till some quarrel had taken place, of which the origin was still wrapped in mystery. Further connection was out of the question, and Elizabeth's pride was appealed to, and not in vain. The wound might have been healed sooner without leaving any scar, had it not been for a lack of sense and tact on the part of Mrs. Crant. She so irritated and worried her daughter that for some time the girl seemed in danger of becoming a heartless flirt, and of breaking hearts for 'pastime' during the gay autumn that followed.

Elizabeth's taste for balls suddenly changed after this episode, but Jane enjoyed everything and was welcome everywhere. She was lively and good-tempered, and very much admired; less volatile than Elizabeth, very well read, and a beautiful dancer; easy to please in everything except a husband! The various aspirants to that honour were rejected without a second thought. One and all, 'their knowledge of history was so defective.' How was it possible to think seriously of a companion for life with whom there could be no rational conversation? At one moment the family hoped for better things on the reappearance of an old friend, Duncan Davidson; but 'they fell out,' and he departed. 'We never could make out what the disagreement had been; perhaps some historical subject; a failure as to dates, or facts, or something—as had been the case with poor Tom Walker.' However, Jane knew what she wanted, and when she was twenty-six she got it, in the shape of old Colonel Pennington, 'very clever, very good, very agreeable, but old and ugly.' Meanwhile she was quite happy at home and visiting her various friends, who were always delighted to have her. We get a pleasant picture of a few days spent at Abbotsford, in the course of a Border tour with Sir Thomas and Lady Lauder. 'Jane was in an ecstasy the whole time. Sir Walter Scott took to her, as who would not? They rode together on two ponies, with the Ettrick Shepherd and all the dogs. Sir Walter gave her all the Border legends, and she corrected his mistakes about the Highlands. At parting he hoped



she would come again, and he gave her a small ring he had picked up among the ruins of Iona, with a device on it no one could ever make out.' Besides Sir Walter, Jane also met at Abbotsford Mrs. Hemans, 'a nice, quiet little woman,' and her two boys, 'quite surprised to find that there was another *lion* in the world besides their mother.'

Elizabeth did not appreciate Sir Walter's novels—she never came across him herself—indeed, it is not easy to discover any trace that in her later years she cared at all for fiction. Jane Austen she never mentions any more than she does the Peninsular War, though one made almost as great a stir as the other! Miss Burney, Miss Ferrier, and the older novelists she does not seem to have read, and though she alludes to Miss Edgeworth two or three times, she gives no clue as to the opinion she formed of her. Poets, too, when she met them, appear to have been judged as men of the common herd, without any of the leniency often held the privilege of greatness. The recollection of Shelley at University never seems to have roused any curiosity about his poems in the mind of Elizabeth. Coleridge, who visited at her Uncle Frere's, she thought a poor mad creature, 'who never held his tongue.' Miss Joanna Baillie, so highly praised by Scott, was 'a nice old lady;' Edward Irving (and his wife and child) struck her merely as being 'very dirty.'

The winters in Edinburgh in those days were very pleasant times, and whatever good things were going, the Grants had a share in them. The quaint individuality that is the result of living in an isolated groove was to be found in plenty, and was (occasionally) a welcome change from the easier manners of those who prided themselves on being 'citizens of the world.' These old-fashioned ladies and gentlemen looked down, as if from a pedestal, on the new standard of behaviour then in vogue, and seldom failed to put their finger on any weak spot. They still held themselves of superior clay to the 'snobs' whom stress of circumstances compelled them to visit, and gazed with horror on any approach to laxity and fastness. Persons so erring were graphically summed up by Miss Clerk of Eldin as 'the sort of people you never see in mourning;' and though the deduction is rapid, is it incorrect? 'He that lacks time to mourn, lacks time to mend. Eternity mourns that.'

During all these years the affairs of Rothiemurchus had gradually been going from bad to worse. Election expenses had proved a heavy drain; his household was lavishly conducted, and

he himself absolutely incapable of putting down waste, or developing the resources of his estate, on which, with a keen eye for the picturesque, he had laid out a great deal of money. In the year 1820 matters came to a crisis. One morning—it seems to have been in the spring—the two younger girls were despatched to some distance with a note, the servants dispersed on various pretexts, and Elizabeth informed by her mother (who appears to have been alone) that an execution was to take place in the house, and the men expected in every moment. This piece of intelligence, utterly unexpected as it was, would have upset most people; but both mother and daughter were perfectly calm; and, indeed, as the furniture was hired, and there was very little plate, the law library and the piano seem the only items on which the bailiffs could lay hands. But the lesson had been learnt; as soon as possible the move to Rothiemurchus was made, and the children set to work trying as far as possible to remedy the mistakes of the parents.

The seven years that followed grew leaner and leaner. The debts amounted to 60,000*l.*, a sum large enough to daunt even the hopefulness of youth, but William was a born farmer and was enchanted to give up the Bar for a more congenial task. The forest industry was developed, the outdoor servants overlooked, while in the house things thrived better and more economically under the guidance of Elizabeth than they ever had done under that of her mother. At first all went happily enough. In the summer their friends were all round them as usual, and the girls were too busy in their different departments to have time to bewail the glories of the past, while in 1822, Elizabeth, on whom the heaviest burden fell, was cheered and rested by some months passed in visiting the South. It was on this occasion that she travelled for the first time in a stage-coach, instead of in the landau-and-four to which she had always been accustomed. In the Highlands coaches were even now few and far between, and great fun was made of the advertisement of one started between Blair and Dunkeld, which ran as follows: 'Pleasing intelligence. The Duchess of Athole starts every morning from the Duke's Arms at eight o'clock.'

After Jane's marriage, in 1826, matters became worse still. With the exception of a very small sum set aside for the family's maintenance, the whole of the profits that could be made out of the estate was devoted by the creditors to the payment of the debts. Every penny that could be saved was saved by the girls,

who walked about in patched and odd satin shoes, and wrote for the magazines in a room without a fire. Oh, what joy when the first effort from Elizabeth's pen produced the sum of 3*l.* from the editor of *Fraser*! while a second cheque for 40*l.* was not long in following.

But the tide of affairs was now on the turn.

The borough of Tavistock, which Mr. Grant had represented during two Parliaments, was required by its owner, the Duke of Bedford, for his son Lord John. The shield of Parliament being withdrawn, Mr. Grant, still very deeply in debt, was liable to be arrested at any moment, and when in order to avoid this he left his home, taking John with him, the spirits of his family must have been at their lowest ebb. But scarcely had he quitted England than the news arrived that he had been nominated to a vacant judgeship in Bombay. This piece of preferment he owed in the first place to Lord Glenelg, and in the second to the opportune production of a bin of Glenlivet whisky on the occasion of George IV.'s visit to Holyrood in 1822.

Here space compels us to take leave of the Grants and their fortunes, which from this time were tolerably prosperous. Mary had become engaged during the four months' voyage out to a Mr. Gardiner, a civilian with a good appointment, and early in 1829 Elizabeth gratified her friends by accepting one Colonel Smith, the very husband they had all picked out for her! His health was bad, and they did not remain long in India, returning in 1830 to settle on an Irish property worth 1,200*l.* a year, which the Colonel had lately inherited from his brother.

There is 'an end indeed of Eliza Grant' are the words with which she closes her recollections, but, as far as her Irish estate was concerned, there was only the beginning of Eliza Smith. Her untiring and successful efforts for the good of her tenantry are alluded to in the preface, and the work she did seems to have been not only extensive but enduring.

In the course of memoirs written exclusively from recollection, many inaccuracies are of course inevitable, and Elizabeth Grant doubtless makes frequent mistakes when she is repeating from mere hearsay—as in the account she gives of the Sobieski Stuarts. But with every allowance in this direction, her memory for the events of her early life remains astonishing. She does not, as far as can be seen, attempt to foist on twenty the riper judgments of forty; she never attempts to gloss over her own shortcomings, or—when

it is necessary they should be mentioned—those of other people; from first to last all is genuine. In reading Madame de Rémusat's reconstructed memoirs we are haunted by a sense that the criticisms are not really (as they purport to be) contemporary with the circumstances, but no such feeling troubles us in the recollections of Elizabeth Grant.

L. B. LANG.

## *Love's Life.*

SPIRIT with the mystic charm  
 Far from mortal help or harm,  
 That can never fade nor die  
 In any mist of memory ;

Spirit with the unnumbered voice  
 That can bid me weep, rejoice,  
 That can compass in its span  
 All that's woman, all that's man ;

Spirit with the golden heart  
 That must ever dwell apart,  
 Yet can never scorn to know  
 Mortals' weal and mortals' woe :

Lady, who with truth of steel  
 Truth's deceptions canst reveal,  
 Let all baser doubtings be,  
 Find the heart of truth in me !

This the lesson thou dost teach,  
 Wakening silence into speech,  
*Truth may waver, truth may die,*  
*Love is Immortality !*

WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

## *The Heart of Memory.*

I SAT beneath a kingly oak,  
 What words were said no mortal spoke;  
 Dark was the night and black the tree:  
 I thought Death's secret, Memory.

I stayed to greet a talking stream,  
 I thought of grief as of a dream—  
 The world was filled with fantasy  
 That made Life's secret, Memory.

Again I trod the self-same spot,  
 Cold was my heart, my passion hot,  
 No consolation could there be:  
 Hell's very name was, Memory.

But when, with years and wonders known,  
 My thoughts to tenderness had grown,  
 Then Heaven's radiance shone for me  
 From the heart's core of, Memory!

WALTER HERRIES POLLOCK.

## *The Secret of the Willow-Wren.*

THE willow-wren is one of the commonest and undoubtedly the most generally diffused of the British songsters. He is a summer visitor, one of the earliest to arrive, usually appearing on the South Coast in the last week in March; a little later he may be met with in very nearly every wood, thicket, hedge, common, marsh, orchard, and large garden throughout the kingdom—it is hard to say, writes Seebohm, where he is not found. Wherever there are green perching-places, and flies and aphides to feed upon, there you will see and hear the willow-wren. He is a sweet and very constant singer from the date of his arrival until about the middle of June, when he becomes silent for a season, resuming his song in July, and continuing it throughout August and even into September. But in spite of his abundance and universality, and the charm of his little melody, he is not familiarly known to the people generally, as they know the robin redbreast, pied wagtail, dunnoek, redstart, and stonechat. The name we call him by is a very old one, and was first used in English by Ray, in his translation of Willughby's *Ornithology*, about two and a half centuries ago; but it still remains a book-name unknown to the rustic. Nor has this common little bird any widely known vernacular name. If by chance you find a countryman who knows the bird, and has a name for it, this will be one which is applied indiscriminately to two, three, or four species. The willow-wren, in fact, is one of those little birds that are 'seen rather than distinguished,' on account of its small size, modest colouring, and its close resemblance to other species of warblers; also on account of the quiet, gentle character of its song, which is little noticed in the spring and summer concert of loud, familiar voices.

One day in London during the late summer I was amused and at the same time a little disgusted at this general indifference to that delicate beauty in a bird-sound which distinguishes the



willow-wren even among such delicate singers as the warblers : it struck me as a kind of æsthetic hardness of hearing. I heard the song in the flower walk, in Kensington Gardens, on a Sunday morning, and sat down to listen to it ; and for half an hour the bird continued to repeat his song two or three times a minute on the trees and bushes within half a dozen yards of my seat. Just after I had sat down, a throstle, perched on the topmost bough of a thorn that projected over the walk, began his song, and continued it a long time, heedless of the people passing below. Now, I noticed that in almost every case the person approaching lifted his eyes to the bird above, apparently admiring the music, sometimes even pausing for a moment in his walk ; and that when two or three persons came together they not only looked up, but made some remark about the beauty of the song. But from first to last not one of all the passers-by cast a look towards the tree where the willow-wren was singing ; nor was there anything to show that the sound had any attraction for them, although they must have heard it. The loudness of the thrush prevented them from giving it any attention, and made it practically inaudible. It was like a pimpernel blossoming by the side of a foxglove, or dahlia, or peony, where, even if seen, it would not be noticed as a beautiful flower.

In a former number of this magazine (October 1896), in an article on the wood-wren, I endeavoured to trace to its source the pleasurable feelings which the song of that bird produces in me and in many others—a charm exceeding that of many more celebrated vocalists. In that article the song of the willow-wren was mentioned incidentally. Now, these two—wood-wren and willow-wren—albeit nearly related, are, in the character of their notes, as widely different as it is possible for two songsters to be ; and when we listen attentively to both we recognise that the feeling produced in us differs in each case, that it has a different cause. In the case of the willow-wren it might be said off-hand that our pleasure is simply due to the fact that it is a melodious sound, associated in our minds with summer scenes. As much could be said of any other migrant's song—nightingale, tree-pipit, blackcap, garden warbler, swallow, and a dozen more. But it does not explain the individual and very special charm of this particular bird—what I have ventured to call the secret of the willow-wren. After all, it is not a deeply hidden secret, and has indeed been half guessed or hinted by various writers on bird melody ; and

as it also happens to be the secret of other singers besides the willow-wren, we may, I think, find in it an explanation of the fact that the best singers do not invariably please us so well as some that are considered inferior.

The song of the willow-wren has been called singular and unique among our birds; and Mr. Warde Fowler, who has best described it, says that it forms an almost perfect cadence, and adds, 'by which I mean that it descends gradually, not, of course, on the notes of our musical scale, by which no birds in their natural state would deign to be fettered, but through fractions of one or perhaps two of our tones, and without returning upward at the end.' Now, this arrangement of its notes, although very rare and beautiful, does not give the little song its highest æsthetic value. The secret of the charm, I imagine, is traceable to the fact that there is distinctly something human-like in the quality of the voice, its timbre. Many years ago an observer of wild birds and listener to their songs came to this country, and walking one day in a London suburb he heard a small bird singing among the trees. The trees were in an enclosure and he could not see the bird, but there would, he thought, be no difficulty in ascertaining the species, since it would only be necessary to describe its peculiar little song to his friends and they would tell him. Accordingly, on his return to the house he proceeded to describe the song and ask the name of the singer. No one could tell him, and much to his surprise, his account of the melody was received with smiles of amusement and incredulity. He described it as a song that was like a wonderfully bright and delicate human voice talking or laughingly saying something rather than singing. It was not until some time afterwards that the stranger in a strange land discovered that his little talker and laughter among the leaves was the willow-wren. In vain he had turned to the ornithological works; the song he had heard, or at all events the song as he had heard it, was not described therein; and yet to this day he cannot hear it differently—cannot dissociate the sound from the idea of a fairy-like child with an exquisitely pure, bright, spiritual voice laughingly speaking in some green place.

And yet Gilbert White over a century ago had noted the human quality in the willow-wren's voice when he described it as an 'easy, joyous, laughing note.' It is still better to be able to quote Mr. Warde Fowler, when writing in *A Year with the Birds*, on the futile attempts which are often made to represent birds' songs by means of our notation, since birds are guided in their

songs by no regular succession of intervals. Speaking of the willow-wren in this connection, he adds: 'Strange as it may seem, the songs of birds may perhaps be more justly compared with the human voice when speaking, than with a musical instrument, or with the human voice when singing.' The truth of this observation must strike any person who will pay close attention to the singing of birds; but there are two criticisms to be made on it. One is that the resemblance of a bird's song to a human voice when speaking is confined to some or to a few species; the second is that it is a mistake to think, as Mr. Fowler appears to do, that the resemblance is wholly or mainly due to the fact that the bird's voice is free when singing, that, like the human voice in talking, it is not tied to tones and semitones. For instance, we note this peculiarity in the willow-wren, but not in, say, the wren and chaffinch, although the songs of these two are just as free, just as independent of regular intervals as our voices when speaking and laughing. The resemblance in a bird's song to human speech is entirely due to the human-like quality in the voice; for we find that other songsters—notably the swallow—have a charm similar to that of the willow-wren, although the notes of the former bird are differently arranged, and do not form anything like a cadence. Again, take the case of the blackbird. We are accustomed to describe the blackbird's voice as flute-like, and the flute is one of the instruments which most nearly resemble the human voice. Now, on account of the leisurely manner in which the blackbird gives out his notes, the resemblance to human speech is not so pronounced as in the case of the willow-wren or swallow; but when two or three or half a dozen blackbirds are heard singing close together, as we sometimes hear them in woods and orchards where they are abundant, the effect is singularly beautiful, and gives the idea of a conversation being carried on by a set of human beings of arboreal habits (not monkeys) with glorified voices. Listening to these blackbird concerts, I have sometimes wondered whether or not they produced the same effect on others' ears as on mine—of people talking to one another in high-pitched and very beautiful tones. Oddly enough, it was only while writing this article that I by chance found an affirmative answer to my question. Glancing through Leslie's *Riverside Letters*, which I had not previously seen, I came upon the following remarks, quoted from Sir George Grove, in a letter to the author, on the blackbird's singing: 'He

selects a spot where he is within hearing of a comrade, and then he begins quite at leisure (not all in a hurry like the thrush) a regular conversation. "And how are you? Isn't this a fine day? Let us have a nice talk," &c., &c. He is answered in the same strain, and then replies, and so on. Nothing more thoughtful, more refined, more feeling, can be conceived.' In another passage he writes: 'I love them' (the robins), 'but they fill a much smaller part than the blackbird does in my heart. To hear the blackbird talking to his mate a field off, with deliberate, refined conversation, the very acme of grace and courtesy, is perfectly splendid.'

There are two more common British songsters that produce much the same effect as the willow-wren and blackbird; these are the swallow and pied wagtail. They are not in the first rank as melodists, and I can find no explanation of the fact that they please me better than the great singers other than their more human-like tones, which to my hearing have something of an exceedingly beautiful contralto sound. The swallow's song is familiar to everyone, but that of the wagtail is not well known. The bird has two distinct songs: one, heard oftenest in early spring, consists of a low rumbling warble, with some resemblance to the whinchat's song; it is the second song, heard occasionally until late June, sometimes uttered on the wing—a torrent of loud, rapidly uttered, and somewhat swallow-like notes—that comes nearest in tone to the human voice, and has the greatest charm.

After these, we find other songsters with one or two notes, or a phrase, human-like in quality, in their songs. Of these I will only mention the blackcap, linnet, and tree-pipit. The most beautiful of the blackcap's notes, which come nearest to the blackbird, have this human sound; and certainly the most beautiful part of the linnet's song is the opening phrase, composed of notes that are both swallow-like and human-like.

It may appear strange to some readers that I put the tree-pipit, with his thin, shrill, canary-like pipe, in this list; but his notes are not all of this character; he is moreover a most variable singer; and it happens that in some individuals the concluding notes of the song have more of that peculiar human quality than any other British songster. No doubt it was a bird in which these human-like, languishing notes at the close of the song were very full and beautiful that inspired Burns to write his 'Address to a Wood-Lark.' The tree-pipit is often called

by that name in Scotland, where the true wood-lark is not found.

O stay, sweet warbling wood-lark, stay,  
Nor quit for me the trembling spray,  
A hopeless lover courts thy lay,  
Thy soothing, fond complaining.

Again, again that tender part,  
That I may catch thy melting art;  
For surely that would touch her heart  
Who kills me wi' disdain.

Say, was thy little mate unkind,  
And heard thee as the passing wind?  
O nocht but love and sorrow joined  
Sic notes o' wae could waken!

Thou tells o' never-ceasing care,  
O' speechless grief and dark despair;  
For pity's sake, sweet bird, nae mair,  
Or my poor heart is broken!

Much more could be said, if space permitted, about these and other species in the passerine order that have some resemblance, distinct or faint, to the human voice in their singing notes—an echo, as it were, of our own emotions, in most cases glad or joyous, but sometimes, as in the case of the tree-pipit, of another character. And even those species that are furthest removed from us in the character of the sounds they emit have some notes that suggest a highly brightened human voice. Witness the thrush and nightingale. The last approaches to the human voice in that rich, musical throb, repeated many times with passion, which is the invariable prelude to his song; and again, in that 'one low piping note, more sweet than all,' four times repeated in a wonderfully beautiful crescendo. Who that ever listened to Carlotta Patti does not remember sounds like these from her lips? It was commonly said of her that her voice was bird-like; certainly it was clarified and brightened beyond other voices—in some of her notes almost beyond recognition as a human voice. It was a voice that had a great deal of the quality of gladness in it, but less depth of human passion than other great singers. Still, it was a human voice; and, just as Carlotta Patti (outshining the best of her sister-singers even as the diamond outsparkles all other gems) rose to the birds in her miraculous flights, so do some of the birds come down to and resemble us in their songs.

If I am right in thinking that it is the human note in the voices of some passerine birds that gives a peculiar and very great charm to their songs, so that an inferior singer shall please us more than one that ranks high, according to the accepted standard, it remains to ask why it should be so. Why, I mean, should the mere likeness to a human tone in a little singing-bird impart so great a pleasure to the mind, when the undoubtedly human-like voices of many non-passerine species do not as a rule affect us in the same way? As a matter of fact, we find in the multitude of species that resemble us in their voices a few, outside of the order of singers, that do give us a pleasure similar to that imparted by the willow-wren, swallow, and tree-pipit. Thus, among British birds we have the wood-pigeon, and perhaps the turtle-dove; the green woodpecker, with his laugh-like cry; the cuckoo, a universal favourite on account of his double fluty call; and (to those who are not inclined to be superstitious) the wood-owl, a most musical night-singer; and the curlew, with, in a less degree, various other shore birds. But in a majority of the larger birds of all orders the effect produced is different, and often the reverse of pleasant. Or if such sounds delight us, the feeling differs in character from that produced by the melodious singer, and is mainly due to that wildness with which we are in sympathy expressed by such sounds. Human-like voices are found among the auks, loons, and grebes; eagles and falcons; cuckoos, pigeons, goatsuckers, owls, crows, rails, ducks, waders, and gallinaceous birds. The cries and shrieks of some among these, particularly when heard in the dark hours, in deep woods and marshes and other solitary places, profoundly impress and even startle the mind, and have given rise all the world over to numberless superstitious beliefs. Such sounds are supposed to proceed from devils, or from demons inhabiting woods and waters and all desert places; from night-wandering witches; spirits sent to prophesy death or disaster; ghosts of dead men and women wandering by night about the world in search of a way out of it; and sometimes human beings who, burdened with dreadful crimes or irremediable griefs, have been changed into birds. The three British species best known on account of their supernatural character have very remarkable voices with a human sound in them; the raven with his angry, barking cry and deep, solemn croak; the booming bittern; and the white or church owl, with his sepulchral screech.

It is, I think, plain that the various sensations excited in us



by the cries, moans, and screams, and the more or less musical notes of different species, are due to the human emotions which they express or seem to express. If the voice simulates that of a maniac, or of a being tortured in body or mind, or overcome with grief, or maddened with terror, the blood-curdling and other sensations proper to the occasion will be experienced; only, if we are familiar with the sound or know its cause, the sensation will be weak. Similarly, if in some deep, silent wood we are suddenly startled by a loud human whistle or shouted 'Hi!' although we may know that a bird, somewhere in that waste of foliage around us, uttered the shout, we yet cannot help experiencing the feelings—a combination of curiosity, amusement, and irritation—which we should have if some friend or some human being had hailed us while purposely keeping out of sight. Finally, if the bird-sounds resemble refined, bright, and highly musical human voices, the voices, let us say, of young girls in conversation, expressive of various beautiful qualities—sympathy, tenderness, innocent mirth, and overflowing gladness of heart—the effect will be in the highest degree delightful.

Herbert Spencer, in his masterly account of the origin of our love of music in his *Psychology*, writes: 'While the tones of anger and authority are harsh and coarse, the tones of sympathy and refinement are relatively gentle and of agreeable timbre. That is to say, the timbre is associated in experience with the receipt of gratification, has acquired a pleasure-giving quality, and consequently the tones which in music have an allied timbre become pleasure-giving and are called beautiful. Not that this is the sole cause of their pleasure-giving quality. . . . Still, in recalling the tones of instruments which approach the tones of the human voice, and observing that they seem beautiful in proportion to their approach, we see that this secondary æsthetic element is important.'

As with instruments, so it is with bird voices; in proportion as they approach the tones of the human voice, expressive of sympathy, refinement, and other beautiful qualities, they will seem beautiful—in some cases even more beautiful than those which, however high they may rank in other ways, are yet without this secondary æsthetic element.

W. H. HUDSON.



## *Suspense.*

**W**ITHOUT, I sit in the sun ;  
 Within, he lies in his pain ;  
 The little school-children run  
     Merrily down the lane,  
 A rosebud of health each one.  
     Within, he lies in his pain ;  
 Without, I sit in the sun.

The sun is hot here without,  
     Beating on brow and breast ;  
 The swifts go crying about  
     The straw-thatched human nest,  
 And faint rings the children's shout—  
     For the voice of an unknown Guest  
 My sick heart listens without.

He lies within in his pain ;  
     Without, I sit in the sun ;  
 Through young grass sweet with the rain  
     Robin and blackbird run—  
 They flute for my friend in vain !  
     I sit without in the sun ;  
 Within, he lies in his pain !

ADA SMITH.

## *The Typewriting Clerk.*

### CHAPTER I.

‘**M**ISS LOWE, I don’t think you are attending, are you?’ It was the first time in more than a year that he had found occasion for such a complaint, and even then her wandering thoughts were not more than half arrested by the reprimand.

‘I beg pardon! The fact is, old Uncle Joseph is gone at last.’

Not having the remotest idea who her Uncle Joseph might be, and rather impatient of his intrusion, dead or alive, into that particular office, Mr. Dalwood was not inclined to waste too much sympathy.

‘I’m sorry,’ he murmured vaguely. ‘But about this letter. Will you be good enough to——’ and he reiterated his instructions before closing the glazed pigeon-hole that separated his sanctum from the small office where the typist and her machine waited upon his instructions. Beyond her, again, was the outer office, fronting the street, and containing the only other clerk—a married man with at least five good and hungry reasons for being sober and industrious.

The letter was quickly done, and as no other business followed immediately, Miss Lowe was able to put both elbows restfully on the table and stare out into a sort of back yard or (by courtesy) garden, which was gravelled, and ornamented in the centre by a melancholy little fountain, which played perpetually, and always by itself. In the basin of this fountain various gold fish took their pleasure sadly, being found more often than not comatose and swollen on their shingly beds, and evidently requiring medical aid. Being a business house, nobody cared much about them, so they languished and died of obscure piscatorial diseases. Perhaps Hester Lowe unknowingly hastened their ends by the bestowal of injudicious dainties as she passed to and fro; but in reality the

886.

dejected little fountain appealed more to her sympathies, being almost the only thing to look at out of window. To-day, however, she could think of nothing properly but the legacy, which had been most unwillingly ceded to her by Uncle Joseph, whose grief at being unable to take it away with him had embittered his last years.

Five thousand pounds sounded unctuous spoken, looked fat and well liking on paper, yet the fortunate legatee could contemplate it without being unduly dazzled. True, it lifted off, for good and all, the fear of a penniless old age, which had often oppressed her; but in other ways, as she knew, there might be disadvantages connected with it. Money was a direct incentive to idleness, and the remembrance of desultory years spent without aim or purpose was bitter to her still. Money might mean a return to the old sloth and self-indulgence, neither of which had a grain of real happiness in them. To lose now the self-respect which the earning of her own bread had caused to grow and thrive, would be a loss without any possible compensation. Of course, to be caged in that little glass den—which had been once a conservatory—for so much of each day was both dull and fatiguing, but it made the after-hours of rest and recreation so unspeakably delicious, that tea, after office duties were over, in the cosiness of her own room, was a dissipation in itself. The delight of leaving school can only be purchased by having been in it; of that she felt assured, and stayed thinking it all out until long past her official time to go.

‘Suppose I give up this drudgery and retire on this fortune of mine, what shall I become? Why, nothing but a loafer and a vagabond, as much as any of those who gather round a public-house on a Sunday morning. That I shall probably go to church will make no real difference between us, save in the eyes of respectability.’ So she decided to alter little or nothing of the circumstances of her life, except in a few small matters, which showed that in spite of a certain largeness of mind she had distinctly feminine notions upon many things.

‘On the strength of this I’ll order some good boots. In future each boot on every foot shall cost at least ten shillings; and I’ll get a pair of real sealskin gloves for next winter, and I’ll have a fowl every Sunday for dinner.’

Having made the typewriter a passive confidant of these demoralising extravagances, she covered it up and fared forth gaily into the whirling dissipations of Dulverton High Street. Just

as she was passing a shop she caught sight of a little ball—an absurd little ball of rubber, and shining with scarlet paint. Two-pence secured her this treasure, which she presented surreptitiously the next morning to the dejected little fountain. To all appearances the gift was acceptable, and the sight of that gaudy little ball bounding and whirling under the austere nose of law itself was a distinct mental refreshment to her. Yes. Francis Dalwood was a lawyer, as his father had been before him; but if his elder brother had lived to take the practice, he would have willingly chosen some other path in life, perhaps with less plodding labour in it. Vaguest rumour hinted that in his student days he had been unsettled of purpose, and restive under the constraints of his work; but if it ever had been so, or was so now, there was no indication. The professional mask was perfect, and he seemed as plodding and punctual as his father before him. Of the woman who took down his instructions in shorthand before typewriting them he knew absolutely nothing. To him she was merely a part of the typewriting machinery, and the glazed pigeon-hole might have been a great gulf dividing them, instead of what it was. If asked concerning her, he would have admitted her diligence and accuracy, and perhaps added that she was a well-conducted young woman. But this last would have been quite an afterthought, and of that part of her which had pitied and consoled even the lonely little fountain, he hadn't the remotest conception. She came, she did her work, she went, and that was all. Now it is proverbial that even kingly dignity is not exempt from the respectful observation of a cat; and as she had a heart singularly at leisure from itself, and only the fountain and her employer to study in the intervals of business, it was only natural that the human interest should easily win. It would have been an utter surprise to Francis Dalwood to learn how well this apparent automaton understood him, and sympathised with the troubles and perplexities of his professional life. It did not take her long to learn from his very footstep in the adjacent room whether things were going ill or well with him; and when he paced monotonously up and down, perhaps through half a morning, she knew perfectly well that the official receiver had made another heavy call upon the unfortunate shareholder of a broken bank. This disastrous bit of property had been left him by his father, in all possible good faith, but it was none the less a millstone round his neck, which had to be dragged with every step he took. To be rebellious under this heavy yoke was only natural, and yet such

things before now have been known to be the resistance that moulds a man's character into strength.

If Hester had been a woman of vainer and smaller mind, his total ignoring of her might easily have checked the sympathy that was growing warmer every week, and beginning to take practical shape in her thoughts; but being by nature both kindly and generous, she accepted the position with a quaint resignation that saw the humorous side of it. Besides, how pleasant it was to have the power of giving and still remain anonymous, both in and out of Dulverton! She had proved this again and again since her accession to fortune, yet no one dreamt of taxing her with the quiet help that seemed to come when most needed. Even the collecting churchwardens had not been able to trace that half-sovereign which appeared every Sunday in the bag to its rightful source.

So it happened that, rightly or wrongly, month after month she identified herself more and more with the perplexities of her employer. Such a foolish preoccupation showed a want of worldly wisdom, and the mere fact that every tone of his voice betrayed accurately to her the fluctuations of desponding courage and energy, indicated that her quick perceptions might have been better employed attending to her own interests instead of his.

The time came when, instead of pacing restlessly up and down, he would sit despondingly with bowed head. She could just see the blurred outlines through the frosted glass of the pigeon-hole, and then, in her anxiety for him, the tapping of the typewriter would cease.

'It's pulling him under; of that I am certain; and this business will go bankrupt unless——'

She thought about it until she could think of nothing else—until she could not rest while the thing remained undone. So entirely had she placed the weight of his harassments on her own shoulders, that to alleviate them seemed as natural as the half-sovereign in the collecting-bag. She saw nothing strange or unusual in it. He wanted the money, she did not, and that settled it. As the outcome of her determination, and through the agency of those whom she had wellnigh sworn to secrecy, he found one morning on his table a letter containing twenty halves of crisp bank-notes, and the notes were for a hundred pounds a piece. It was a munificent gift, costing her as yet very little, as she had already decided against using the money for herself; and if only

she had bestowed it on the clerk with the five hungry children it might have meant compound interest to all concerned.

Francis Dalwood, hardly daring to believe his own eyes, read the businesslike note that accompanied this apparently heaven-sent *dénouement* of all his difficulties. It contained nothing but an official assurance that the other halves would follow promptly on the announced receipt of the first; that they were a free gift from some grateful client, and that he desired to make known his gratitude but not his name. This was all; and cudgel his brains as he might, Mr. Dalwood could not think of any client who owed and paid gratitude on such a magnificent scale. He was a long, long time over his correspondence that morning, and Hester, who knew perfectly the contents of one of his letters, felt nervously self-conscious. With noiseless touches she played tunes on the keys of the typewriter, and began to feel really desperate before the glazed shutter was pulled back. She looked up quickly, searchingly, to see the result of her handiwork, but the professional mask showed nothing through, not even a sparkle of new hope in the eyes. It was her first disappointment in the transaction, and many more were to follow. Yet surely he stood a little more upright, as though a weight had fallen from his shoulders. In dictating to her, his voice sounded precisely as usual; but as she was a little slow that morning, he looked half absently out of window.

‘What has that fountain got hold of this morning?’

She followed his careless eyes with the strained scrutiny of her own; for to have been identified just then with that absurdly frivolous little ball would only have been one degree better than being found guilty of the bank-notes.

‘It’s—it’s a *ball*, isn’t it?’ she inquired, looking painfully short-sighted. ‘Dear me! how very odd!’

But she saw then, with great satisfaction, that he had forgotten her and the dictation, and was looking at the little ball without seeing it, with a most unbusinesslike smile. He was doing nothing but just remembering the two thousand, and all it could do for him. With a smile on her face that reflected his, she punctuated blandly with a full stop, and sat waiting his pleasure. When he suddenly returned to business she was, as usual, automatically grave.

‘Where are you, please?’

“‘I must remind you that in the matter of——’” she said; ‘and then there is a full stop!’

He frowned impatiently at his stupidity and hers.

'A full stop in the middle of a sentence? Miss Lowe, what are you thinking about?'

Between them they put the matter right, and then the shutter was drawn to again. Only in that one action alone did he appear to recognise that he was dealing with a woman and not a machine, for he always shut her out gently, using no haste and making little sound. A rough, curt flinging to of that shutter would have jarred her again and again.

For a little while things went much as usual, except that Mr. Dalwood's business seemed to draw him rather frequently to town. Then, to the general surprise, he took a house—quite a fashionable house—which had been recently built, on the outskirts of the quiet little town, and the rumour sprang up that of course he was going to get married. The clerk and Hester Lowe were busily plied with questions; but the one knew nothing definitely, and the other, full of vague disquietude, never encouraged gossip concerning her employer. Just six weeks after that unaccountable windfall which had so smoothed the path before him, he gave her notice to leave. The dismissal was not unkindly done, but simply as a matter of necessary business.

'I am making changes here,' he told her, 'which will oblige me to keep two regular clerks, who will reside in this house when I have left it.'

Like a snow-shower his words seemed to cover all her thoughts with a curious blankness, so that only here and there could peep forth a tiny blade of humour.

'Am I not, then, a regular clerk?'

'You are certainly, but not precisely in the way I mean. I shall be most happy to give you all possible help in the way of references.'

I doubt if she even thanked him. Somehow she had thought confidently of sitting and working in that glass case, with every day and hour brightened by seeing her money turned to good and useful account, by hearing no more restless paces to and fro, by seeing his face glow brighter with every prosperous year. These were stupid, idle fancies for any business woman to have, and their result proved them folly.

He certainly missed her, the morning after her final departure, when, in pursuance of old custom, he threw open the pigeon-hole and found nothing but orderly blankness; still it was only as a man might miss the darns in his socks by finding holes there



instead. In gazing at the idle typewriter it struck him that Miss Lowe had foolishly gone without those generously worded testimonials which he was so willing to give; and, knowing quite by chance that she was still in Dulverton, he determined to call and put this little matter right, because she had certainly done her duty in that state of life to which poverty had called her.

Hester Lowe had two rooms in a staid little house standing just where town merged itself definitely into country; and as he was ushered in by the landlady, and his former clerk rose to receive him, he thought at first it was some stranger. She had been out paying the last of her small debts—amongst others the Sabbatical fowl, which had been tough and flavourless for at least three Sundays—and, coming in damp and dispirited, had changed the official serge for some soft, womanly garment, which here and there rippled into frills and fluffiness. The face, too, was different, being both pale and wistful; for she was standing, not undismayed, at this cross-road of her life, quite uncertain which way to go. Not for a moment could he reconcile this woman with the one he had come to see. She was so different, and her surroundings aided and abetted the illusion, having absolutely nothing in common with the little glass den.

‘I called to remind you about the testimonial. You ought to have it before leaving Dulverton.’

‘Oh, a reference? Thanks. But I doubt if it is needed.’

He sat down, and drew pen and ink, which were close at hand, towards him.

‘You will find it is much needed. May I ask if you have anything in view?’ He was writing as he spoke.

‘No—nothing in view.’

He frowned a little and went scratching on.

‘Miss H. Lowe—what does H. stand for? It is better with the full name.’

‘Hester.’

So he didn’t even know as much as that about her; and the scraping pen set her teeth on edge.

‘There,’ he said, handing it to her; ‘will that do? If not, I will add anything you please.’

She read the few formal words bearing witness to her worth and diligence, while he glanced round the room, marvelling what a woman could do with sixty pounds a year.

‘It will do excellently,’ she said. ‘Thank you.’

'I doubt if it is quite enough, now I come to think of it. Give it back. I will add a little more.'

But her grasp tightened on the sheet of paper.

'You have said quite enough. I like that word "faithful." It really expresses everything.'

He glanced up into the soft, serious face above him, and fully realised that this was the first time he had really seen her, and the thought struck him that a man hurt and in pain would find comfort in such a face bending over and soothing him.

At parting they shook hands.

'Do you know,' he said, 'I feel now that I haven't been half nice enough to you. It must have been terribly dull work for you.'

'Not at all. You never bullied me—I should have hated that—and you paid me punctually. What more was necessary?'

She didn't mean to be bitter, yet he went away distinctly remorseful. After he was gone she laughed quietly and then wiped her eyes.

'It's really very comical when one looks at it,' she said. 'And if ever a person turned herself out of a situation by her own act and deed, I am that person. It's really very comical!'

And she wiped her eyes again.

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## CHAPTER II.

It was two years before Hester Lowe came back to Dulverton, just to please herself with a sight of the place she liked so well. Why it drew her so, she hardly knew; still, it would certainly be pleasant to find out how much of thriving prosperity her money had brought to the man who had needed it more than she. Through the two years she had followed his career in imagination, endowing him first with that rumoured wife, and then, in process of time, with an heir to the property. It was castle-building on a most unselfish scale, without the least fear of structural weakness; for in all her thoughts of him he was invariably happy and successful.

Now Dulverton being on a branch line, she had to change at the junction, which was just then crowded with people returning from some local races. The majority were somewhat noisy and rough, so Hester stood quietly on one side, an interested and

amused looker-on. When the branch train drew up there was something of a scuffle for places, and in the confusion she found herself hustled into a first-class carriage, without any legal right to be there, for she was travelling third. The compartment was soon full of noisy men, who were obviously of the bookmaking fraternity, and whose comments on the day's doings were sufficiently loud and hilarious to make her wish she had chosen a quieter day for her journey. The train was just on the move when some one got in; but Hester never even turned away from her window until the salutation addressed to this late comer stung her into attention.

'Halloo, Dalwood! You cut it rather too fine, my dear fellow!'

Before turning her head she had time to resent the unpleasant familiarity of address. Surely Mr. Dalwood—who had carried himself proudly in past days—would reprove such impertinent freedom, and she almost waited to hear his curt repudiation before looking at him. But it never came, and as her startled eyes surveyed him she began to understand why; for the man looked not much above these his associates, save that he had once been a gentleman. Without being actually tipsy, his face was flushed with drinking, and the flush looked deep, as if it had been there some time. His clear eyes had become flickering and uncertain, and his clothes, though good, were slovenly and ill cared for. His manner was the manner of a man going fast downhill; his laugh had recklessness and no shadow of merriment in it. The bitter shame of seeing him so, made her turn away before he could recognise her; and, sitting in dismayed misery with averted head, she tried to think what had brought him to this. 'His wife must be a bad woman. Nothing but that could have changed him so.' So she thought while listening to the desultory bursts of talk.

'Your luck's been bad to-day, Dalwood, hasn't it?' inquired one of them, who was evidently uproarious with good fortune.

'My luck always is bad, not having the *experience* of you fellows. Fortunate gambling requires, I find, a liberal education and broad views of neighbourly duty.'

That he despised them no less than himself was evident; but they chose to ignore his contempt, perhaps on account of their liberal education.

'You'll finish the evening with us, at any rate; it's not worth parting company now, after such a jolly day.'

He may have had his own ideas concerning the jolly day, but

he assented carelessly enough, as though his time was an idle and useless commodity. In her distress at this fatal self-surrender she faced him again, quite unconscious of the shock and despair in her look. This time, in spite of the rather dim light, he recognised her, and even the flush of wine faded and grew less; for her face in its distress was as some clear mirror, showing him what he had become. The half-made attempt to raise his hat was deliberately arrested, and she saw that a gentlemanly instinct made him refuse to identify her ever so remotely with the company he was in. For the rest of the short journey he remained absolutely silent, nor even glanced at her again. At Dulverton Station they all got out, some of the gentlemen being unsteady on their legs, and it was more particularly these who suggested an immediate visit to the station hotel for refreshment after the fatigues of the journey. Now Hester was not a particularly brave or strong-minded woman, but when she saw the most unsteady gentleman of all familiarly seize Francis Dalwood's arm, for greater security and to make sure of his companionship, she acted as few women would have found courage to act. Quite regardless of appearances, she went deliberately up to Mr. Dalwood, who was the very centre of this unpleasing group, and addressed him without hesitation.

'Mr. Dalwood, I believe we are going the same way. May I walk with you as it is growing so dark?'

He looked at the pale face, so earnest and set, and laughed a little—gently at the notion of his way and hers being the same; but when the man at his side laughed too, after quite another fashion, Dalwood shook him off as he might have shaken off something vile. 'I am entirely at your service, Miss Lowe.' And without another word or look at those others, he moved away by her side. They walked silently together, for Hester was quite unequal to conversational platitudes just then, while he was wondering what strange whim had brought her back there, in time to see the completion of his ruin—she who had once said that to be faithful meant everything. He had often thought of that wistfully spoken answer, since he had become unfaithful to himself. As they passed the house he had taken two years ago, she saw bills flaunting in the windows announcing a sale, and also that it was to let, and turned dumbly upon him, as though afraid to ask what it meant.

'Things have altered, Miss Lowe, since you were here—and not, as you perceive, for the better. You are going to the same

lodgings?' He took her assent for granted; and as they went up the quiet, orderly street, with shops already shuttered, she thought it looked as though a funeral had just passed through.

At the door of the quiet little house she paused to thank and bid him good-bye, but as though he felt a certain strength and comfort in that trembling hand of hers, he asked permission to come inside. 'You will find everyone open-mouthed and eloquent concerning my misdeeds, but I have a fancy to tell you the tale myself. May I?' The landlady's effusive welcome was cut short by the sight of Mr. Dalwood, and the two were soon left alone together in the room that she had made so pretty and homelike in the old days. There was nothing particularly pretty about it now, but as she silently made the tea and gave him some, he thought again, and with more knowledge, that a man hurt and in pain would like such a face as hers about him. It did not even strike him as odd that he should confide unreservedly in her, so strongly did her pity and grief break down the barriers between them.

'It is a short story—and, I fear, a hopelessly common one, yet a little difficult to tell. If I weary you by too many words, you must remember how often I have wearied myself by thinking—and regretting—but to no good purpose. I may as well state frankly that from the very first I hated this place and the work I had to do, but had sense enough then to hide this from my clients and others, who knew me only as the plodding, careful man of business. But in deceiving them I could never deceive myself, and such a sameness of days, without excitement or change, was almost intolerable. Still, I *did* work, because I wanted to earn enough money to marry the sister of a great chum of mine in the student days; he was much richer than I, but our mutual love of pleasure and amusement made us boon companions. This hope, which was not without encouragement, kept me drudging on; but, as perhaps you know, I lost money instead of gaining it, by the failure of that bank. Only with the utmost difficulty could I keep my head above water, and I had given up all hope of ever attaining my desire when a most extraordinary thing happened—but I am tiring you, surely; you look so white?'

'Oh! why do you stop? I want to hear all—*all!*'

And he obeyed without understanding her wakening fear of her own handiwork. 'The occurrence I speak of was nothing less than the anonymous gift of two thousand pounds, and to this day I am utterly in the dark as to the donor. I wrote accepting it

gladly as a loan free of interest, but telling the agents that in the future I would hold myself in readiness to pay it back if called upon. A vain promise this—as empty as my life is now; but no one has claimed it, and at the time, with the sudden ceasing of anxiety, I thought my fortune was made. Like a fool I launched out into most unwise expenditure, and made changes, all for the worse. Not only were they unwise, but useless too; for on a nearer inspection of the beauties of Dulverton, Miss Sefton decided, for good and all, that no affection of mine could compensate her for having to live in such a place. This disappointment—for I can honestly say it was a most bitter one and totally unexpected—completely paralysed what little energy I had; and the uphill work, which had always dragged, seemed no longer worth the trouble of doing. I let myself go—and the business too—and these lapses mean—what you have seen this evening. I am lower even than those men, having known better things. No one can despise me more heartily than I despise myself. I think it is the only bit of honest feeling left in me.'

The story, bad in itself, was made worse by his manner of telling it; and the apathetic rendering of himself up to the caprice of an evil destiny without apparently a struggle, terrified Hester. It was a shock, too, to discover only weakness where she had imagined strength and manful endeavour, and to feel that she had audaciously meddled with his life, only to mar it. After all, her act had been a subtle form of self-indulgence, bringing bitter harvest.

'It was strange about that money,' she said fearfully. 'Did you never even suspect from whom it came?'

'Never, really; but in my fanciful moments, when things troubled me more than they do now, I have thought the gift was evilly meant, and sent as a curse instead of a blessing, for nothing ever prospered with me after. You will laugh at me perhaps when I tell you, that even in the drudgery of scraping together enough for that rapacious bank, and even while hating it, I *felt* that it was making a man of me—that it was literally grinding me, little by little, into greater strength and doggedness—I can think of no better word—and when the money came it was like removing the strong grip of a firm hand from a runaway horse. Another year or two perhaps of such discipline might have made me, what I never shall be now—a decent credit to my profession, and not a disgrace.'

'Stop! stop! You do not know what you are saying!'



Perhaps he had never heard such a cry of pain. It matched the misery on her face, and startled him completely out of himself.

'Miss Lowe, I am a fool to have distressed you so. It is as if I had been accusing you, instead of myself, which is a poor reward for your kind and efficient service. I have often——'

She stopped him, unable to bear it. 'Give me ten minutes, only ten minutes of silence, and then—I have something to tell you.'

With an attempt to hide her utter wretchedness from him, she lowered the lamp, which was shining full on her face; whilst he, lost in wonder, looked at her in silence. What possible thing could she have to tell him that should cause her such distress? The mere witnessing of it made him feel intensely sorry for her, and it was the healthiest emotion he had felt for some time. While Hester Lowe was desperately striving after a means of undoing the harm she had wrought in all innocence, the time of grace was up. He hastened it, with the hope of putting an end to her distress.

'Miss Lowe, you are worrying yourself about nothing; so let us have done with it.'

Turning slowly, she faced him. 'That money,' she said miserably, 'was mine. I sent it to you.'

At first he thought her hysterical, and speaking without sense.

'You, Miss Lowe! Impossible! And only earning sixty pounds a year!'

'Can you not remember my mentioning the death of an uncle? He left me money, which then I had no real use for; and, knowing so well that you were hard driven at the time and greatly harassed for want of it, I sent you the sum you speak of, hoping it would bring you nothing but prosperity and good fortune. Of course I never meant you to know this, but now I dare not keep silence.'

Incredible as it seemed, he was somehow forced to believe it, and his eyes slowly sank before hers.

'If this be so—and I cannot doubt your word—I ought to be most grateful; but, knowing the ill use I have made of your kindness, I am conscious only of humiliation—great humiliation—that makes me even lower than I thought.'

The fatal indifference was at last pierced through; but to see him so humbled was only one degree less painful. She went closer, and laid a gentle hand upon him.

'But in a little while you will stand upright. I am so sure



that you will, because *I claim your promise of returning the money.* Oh! not for myself. Never think that for one moment. But it must be earned to buy back the old honour and probity, the old self-respect. Let us begin at once—you in your old room, and I in the glass den where I was always so happy.'

Her touch and voice were both wistfully eloquent; even a harder nature than his might have been moved by them to great regret.

'The time is gone by for a new beginning, Hester, and my work has passed into other hands. My clients have nearly all left me.'

'But they will come back when they see how earnestly we are trying to regain their confidence, when they see nothing but industry and hard daily striving to do well. Many, too, are old friends of your father, and they will come back when they find how utterly we are to be trusted.'

She could not have touched him more than by that pathetic identifying of herself with his follies and sins; yet he saw no hope.

'It would take a lifetime to build up the business again on its ruined foundation.'

'A lifetime! That is not much to redeem a thing of priceless worth. I'll give mine willingly, to its last breath. Won't you give yours?'

She was kneeling there by his bowed figure, and this simple, solemn dedication of herself to raising a sunken wreck took from him the power of saying one word. She misunderstood his silence, and despair suddenly overturned all self-control, and she burst into a passion of sobbing. 'I say it is a cruel thing to lay the burden of a ruined life upon mine—a cruel thing, and it will break my heart.'

All the manliness of his nature, which had been so sadly crushed and broken, sprang into new life at the agonised appeal. 'I will begin again, Hester—I swear it—and do better, so help me God!'

So it was in this wise that Hester Lowe came back to the old work in the old place. On the first morning she thought the little fountain playing by itself sparkled with a gleam of welcome; but she gave it no plaything for many long months, for the time was a time of probation. With her return to the glass den came also the old official formality—in its outward form at least—and in office hours her manner was precisely the same as it had always

been, businesslike and respectful. But underneath, in both employer and employed, lay a deep confidence and sympathy that made all the difference in the world, and the glazed pigeon-hole was never closed between them unless a client came in. It was wonderful how the struggle to regain a lost footing, which seemed often a weary, hopeless task, was lightened to him by the mere sight of her, quietly and busily occupied; for, with womanly guile, she would make work when there was little or none, just to keep him in heart. But strive as they might, he to work and she to comfort and sustain, it took years, many and long, before the tide of confidence turned back in its strength. The path uphill was slippery and steep; yet, once planted, his foot never faltered, and any advance was steadily held and maintained. He lost his youth, and his face grew lined and worn before its time, but gradually strength moulded itself out of weakness, and after patient toil and many disappointments came success at last. Once more he was held in honour and esteem by his friends and neighbours, and knew himself their trusted adviser—knew himself, moreover, to be worthy of this trust, yet in all humility. At last the day came when he could go to Hester and absolve himself of a portion of his debt.

‘There is a thousand pounds in the bank, Hester, that is yours. The business is fully worth another thousand, and that is yours too. Tell me if at last I stand upright before you.’

‘Always,’ she answered clearly, although her eyes were bright with thankful tears. ‘Always from the very first. And now I can leave Dulverton in peace and content, knowing all is well with you.’

They were walking towards the golden sunset, and he answered her smilingly, although, like hers, his eyes were wet. ‘And where will you go, Hester? I must know that in order to fetch you back again, unless I can detain you before you start.’

The slight playfulness cancelled not an atom of the true and tender feeling, nor did she even pretend to misunderstand him.

‘It might not be well,’ she answered, striving as always to think only of his welfare. ‘You ought to——’

But her sapient advice was ruthlessly put on one side.

‘Hester! I will be content with your true answer to one question. Do not you think if ever two people belonged to each other in this world it is you and I? By how many links are we not joined? I cannot even name them all, though I have them

by heart. I love you dearly, and owe you every good in life. I should be utterly lost without you now.'

'Not more than I without you,' she answered honestly, as he drew her closer; 'and if I had gone away as I spoke so glibly about doing, I should have been miserable—*miserable!*'

The next day the little fountain was playing with the gayest, brightest ball that love could find and money buy.

ELLEN ADA SMITH.

## *The Season of the Year.*

A YEAR is, roughly speaking, the period which it takes the earth to perform one complete revolution round the sun. I say 'roughly speaking' with due humility, having the fear of the expert ever before my eyes, because I know that if I do not sing small, that inconvenient person, the astronomical critic, will come down upon me at once like a wolf on the fold, with minute distinctions about the mean, the tropical, and the sidereal year; matters of immense importance at Greenwich Observatory, no doubt, but elsewhere of very little interest indeed, seeing that they differ from one another by so many minutes only. Let us leave the astronomers their own problems. The year with which I am going to deal humbly here is a much more commonplace, ordinary, and comprehensible year—the visible year of vegetation, of plant and animal life, of the four seasons; the year as roughly known to children and savages, and to the weeds, the flowers, the bees and the squirrels.

It has often struck me as curious that people took this complex concept of the year so much for granted—inquired so little into its origin and discovery. Yet it is by no means everywhere obvious. How did men first come to notice, in the tropics especially, that there was such a thing as the year at all? How did they first observe, save in our frozen north, any fixed sequence or order in the succession of Nature? How did they learn, even here, that spring would infallibly follow winter, and summer be succeeded in due course by autumn? And, to go a step farther back, how did the plants and animals, in all parts of the world alike, come originally to discover and adapt themselves to all these things? How did the bee know that she must 'gather honey all the day from every opening flower,' the summer through, in order to use it up as bodily fuel in winter? How did the plants learn when to blossom and produce seed? In one word, how did the seasons come to be automatically recognised?

That they *are* automatically recognised, even by plants, quite apart from the stimulus of heat or cold, drought or rain, a single fact (out of many like it) will sufficiently prove. Trees brought from Australia to England, where the seasons are reversed, try for two or three years to put forth leaves and flowers in October or November—the southern spring. It takes them several autumns before they learn that the year has been turned upside down—that June is now summer and December winter. This shows that life moves in regular cycles, adapted to the seasons, but not directly dependent upon them. The rhythm of the world has set up an organic rhythm which now spontaneously and automatically follows it.

At first sight, to the dweller in the temperate zone at the present day, the questions I have put above may seem needless; not to say childish. But that is perhaps because we have all too much the habit of taking it for granted that what is true here and now has also been true everywhere and always. A first visit to the tropics often enough rudely disturbs this uninquiring attitude of mind. For in the tropics, and especially in the equatorial region, there is no winter and no summer, no spring and no autumn. The world wags wearily through an unending display of monotonous greenery. As far as temperature goes, the year is pretty much alike in all its months. Yet not only do equatorial men recognise the existence of the year as a natural epoch quite as much as other men—not only do equatorial savages celebrate annual feasts, count ages by years, and perform certain rites in certain months only—but also animal and vegetable nature recognises the year; trees have their month for blossoming and fruiting, birds their month for assuming the plumage of courtship, for nesting and hatching, almost as markedly as elsewhere. The recognition of the year both by man and by Nature is not therefore entirely dependent upon the difference of summer and winter, as such. We must go deeper, and I think, when we come to consider geological time, much deeper, if we wish to understand the true character of yearliness—a word which I venture here to coin to express this meaning.

Have you ever quite realised what the tropical year is like? Suppose you are living on or near the equator, then in December the sun is south of you and at its greatest distance away; you have, so to speak, a relative winter. But in March the sun is overhead; it is now full midsummer. By the end of June the sun has gone north, and is once more on a tropic; you have a

second winter ; not much of a winter, I admit, but still, a relative winter. By September he has returned overhead again, and you are enduring a second summer. In December he has once more retreated to the southern tropic (Capricorn), and it is comparative winter. Thus the equatorial year consists of four distinct seasons, in two of which the sun stands directly overhead, while in two he is at his northern or southern limit. I may add that the effect is always curious when, as you face the sun, you see that he is moving in his diurnal path, not from left to right ('the way of the sun,' as we say), but from right to left (or 'widdershins'). You are never till then aware how natural and inevitable has seemed the opposite direction : when you find it reversed the effect is surprising.

Now, the distance to which the sun travels north or south of you, if you live on the equator—I use ordinary terms instead of astronomical ones for simplicity's sake—is so comparatively small that within the tropics themselves you never notice much difference as to the amount of heat between one period of the year and another. In equatorial countries the day and night temperature is much the same all the year round : if the country be plain it is always hot ; if mountainous, like the district about Bogotá, it is 'a perpetual spring ;' one day is always much the same as the one that went before and the one that comes after it. Even on the actual tropics, again, the difference is too slight to make any marked change in the temperature ; people living on the northern tropic (Cancer), for example, have the sun vertical to them on June 21, and some forty-three degrees south of them on December 21. Nevertheless, the sun is still as near them and as powerful as he is at Milan or Venice in the height of summer ; and the consequence is that, as a matter of fact, the thermometer within the tropics and at sea-level seldom descends below seventy-five degrees or eighty degrees, even at midnight in the relative winters. For the heating power of the sun depends, of course, upon the directness of his rays, and lessens with their obliquity ; in Venice and Milan they are strong enough to make the ground very hot in July and August, though it has been cooled before by a northern winter ; much more then in Jamaica or Madagascar, which have never been cooled, does the accumulated heat keep everything warm even when the sun is most oblique—and he never reaches the same obliquity as in an English summer. The ground is hot, the houses are hot, wood and stone are hot, and they have all been hot from time immemorial.

Yet tropical and equatorial trees and plants have their definite seasons to flower and fruit, just the same as elsewhere. This seems surprising at first when one visits the tropics. You cannot see why everything should not flower and fruit the whole year round. And yet, at one time pine-apples are 'in,' at another, mangoes. And these seasons differ in the northern and southern hemispheres; what is mango-winter in the one being mango-summer in the other. I do not say the seasons anywhere in the tropics differ markedly; still, they do differ; the tropical year is divided into times and months for agriculture just as much as any other. Thus there are regular dates in each hemisphere for planting, tending, and cutting the sugar-cane. Now, what is the reason of these changes in vegetation, when temperature remains so constant? Why do not trees and shrubs of each kind flower up and down throughout the year irregularly—now one individual and now another? Why are there seasons for things at all in the tropics?

The answer is, because the same causes which produce summer and winter in temperate climates produce other changes of other sorts in the tropical region. The temperature, it is true, remains the same, or approximately the same; but the meteorological conditions vary. Even with ourselves, summer is not only hotter but also drier than winter; winter is marked by rain and snow as well as by lowered temperature. In the tropics, on the other hand, it is rather the summer or summers that are wet, for there is a certain moving zone of equatorial calms in which it practically keeps on raining always. But this zone is not fixed; it flits with the sun. When the sun goes northward for the northern summer the rainy zone goes with him; when he turns southward again the zone shifts after him. Thus places on or near the two tropics have one rainy season a year, while places on the equator have usually two. The intervening dry seasons are often very dry and parched, indeed; and where this is markedly the case, the rainy season acts just as spring does in the north, or as the inundation does in Egypt; it is the beginning of vegetation. The plants that were dry and dormant during the arid months wake up into fresh life; the branches put forth new leaves; the brown seeds germinate; the flowers appear; and in due time the fruit ripens. Everything in these cases depends upon the recurrence of the rainy season, just as everything in India depends upon the bursting of the monsoons, and everything in Egypt on the rising of the Nile. I have seen a dry plain in Jamaica bare and brown one day, and



covered six or eight inches high with fresh green waving guinea-grass the day but one after. The rains had come meanwhile, and Nature had awaked with more than spring-like awakening. In those hot climates everything grows by magic as soon as it gets the needed water.

Indeed, we may say that in half the world the seasons, organically speaking—I mean, the seasons of plant and animal life—depend upon heat and cold, summer and winter, snow or sunshine; but in the other half they depend almost entirely upon drought and rainfall. Even as near home and as far north as Algeria, the summer is far too dry and dusty for agriculture; the autumn rains set in about October or November; they are immediately followed by the ploughing; and the winter becomes for most purposes the practical summer. Fruits and vegetables are at their best in January and February; the fields are full of flowers up to March or April; in June, July, and August, the country is an arid and weary desert. But the seasons for dates are almost reversed; they ripen in autumn. In Egypt again, where everything depends upon the inundation, the seasons are still more complicated; the inundation begins to subside in October; in Upper Egypt the winter season which follows is far the most important for agriculture, and crops sown as the water subsides are reaped from four to seven months after. But in the Delta, rice, cotton, and indigo are sown in the spring (March or April) and harvested in October, November, and December. Here, irrigation and temperature come in as disturbing elements, for the Delta feels something of the cold of winter.

I could give many other instances, but these will suffice. As a general rule, we may say that in the temperate and frigid zones the seasons for plants and animals are ruled by heat and cold, but that in tropical and even in sub-tropical climates, rainfall and drought, themselves largely due to the same circumstances, are the ruling factors.

Again, everybody knows that winter and summer, and the other phenomena which simulate or accompany them, such as wet and dry seasons, depend upon the fact that the earth's axis is not perpendicular to the plane in which the earth moves round the sun, but slightly inclined to it. Now, a year in itself, viewed as a measure of time, is merely the period which it takes the earth to perform one such complete revolution. During one-half of each such revolution the north pole is turned at a con-

siderable angle towards the sun, and during the other half, the south pole. When the north pole is so turned we call it summer in the northern hemisphere; when the south pole is being favoured, and the north is receiving less light and heat, we call it winter. Let us suppose for a moment that the earth had not got this twist or kink in its axis; that the equator was always presented exactly towards the sun; what then would happen? Obviously, there would be no change of seasons. The day and night would have fixed lengths which never varied; climate would in each place be uniform and, barring accidents of elevation or distribution of land and water, the climate of each place would also depend entirely the whole year round on its distance from the equator. Roughly speaking, the temperature of a district would be the temperature it now possesses in March and September, only not quite so cold as March nor so warm as September, owing to the absence of accumulated heat from summer or of reserves of ice and snow from winter. In one word, under such conditions there would have been climates—marked belts of climate; but there would not have been seasons.

Seasons, however, depend in great part, as Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace has ingeniously shown, on a great many things besides this mere inclination of one end or the other of the earth towards the sun in June and January. Much must be laid to the count of accumulated stores of heat or cold; and though accumulated cold is physically a misnomer, still for all practical purposes we may apply the words fairly enough to the ice-caps of the pole and the glaciers of mountain systems. And here we come face to face with the very core of our problem: for the odd part of it is that seasons (at least as we know them) seem to be quite a recent and exceptional phenomenon in the history of our planet. So far as we can judge, geologically speaking, the earth during all its earlier life enjoyed, over all its surface, what we should now consider tropical or sub-tropical conditions. England—or rather the land that occupied the part of the earth's crust where England now stands—had a vegetation of huge tree-ferns and palms and cycads during the primary period; as late even as the middle tertiaries it had a vegetation like that of South Carolina or Upper India. Greenland itself, in quite recent times, flourished like a green bay tree, and did not belie its odd modern name. The world as a whole enjoyed perpetual summer. In one word, except in something like the equatorial sense, there were practically no seasons. The sun went north and south, no doubt, as now, but

the temperature, even in the relative winter, seems to have remained perennially mild and genial.

It is true occasional slight traces of glacial epochs, earlier than the great and well-known glacial epoch, break here and there the almost continuous geological record of palmy and balmy world-wide summers; yet, taking the geological monuments as a whole, they show us few or no signs of anything worth calling a serious winter till quite recent periods. Large-leaved evergreens are still, in the day-before-yesterday of geology, the order of the day; magnolias and liquidambar, cinnamons and holly-oaks, vines and rotang-palms formed the forests even of miocene Britain. The animals during all the tertiary period were of what we now regard as tropical or sub-tropical types—lions, rhinoceroses, hippopotamuses, monkeys, or more antique races, equally southern in aspect. There could have been little change of winter and summer during this long warm spell; the variations can have been scarcely more than those of dry and rainy seasons. The trees never lost their leaves; the fruits and flowers never ceased to follow one another; no interruption of the food-supply drove insects to hibernate in their silken cocoons, or squirrels and bears to lay by stores of food or fat for the cold and hungry winter.

Nevertheless, taking the world round as it stands, we must believe that the distinction of seasons grew up, both for plants and animals, and for man or his ancestors, during this age of relatively unmarked summers and winters. For the tropics more than anywhere else preserve for us to-day the general features and aspect of this earlier time; they have never had the continuity of their stream of life rudely interrupted by the enormous changes of the glacial epoch. Yet, even in the tropics, things, as we saw, have seasons. There are annuals and perennials there, as elsewhere. Each kind has its month for sprouting, for flowering, for fruiting, for shedding its seed; and men in the tropics, some of them long isolated in oceanic islands, or in great insulated regions like Australia or New Guinea, from the rest of their kind in the temperate regions, nevertheless know and observe the year, and perform all their functions, agricultural or religious, by yearly cycles. For example, there is among them all an annual feast for the dead, and widows mourn their husbands for one year from their burial. Observation of the year, therefore, both automatically by organisms at large and consciously by man, antedates and is independent of observation of the existence of summer or winter.

I do not think, however, that man would have noted the merely astronomical year—the year of the sun's position—at least till a relatively late stage in culture, if he had not first noticed the organic year—the regular recurrence of plant and animal seasons. So many yams—that is to say, so many yam-harvests—in other words so many years, is a common savage way of reckoning times and ages. But they call it 'yams,' not summers or winters. And when I say yams, I give that merely as a single instance, for elsewhere the 'seed-time and harvest' are reckoned indifferently in maize or millet, rice or barley, according to the agriculture of the particular people. Even hunting races know that at certain times of year certain foods abound; and this is true of equatorial savages and equatorial plants or animals, as well as of others.

Moons are more obvious measures of time than suns, in the tropics at least—probably everywhere; for the waxing and waning of the moon mean much to people who live largely out of doors; and the month is, perhaps, the earliest fixed mode of reckoning time beyond a day or two. Most savages count time mainly by so many moons. But they must also have noticed early that after a certain number of moons (usually about thirteen), certain fruits or seeds were ripe again; especially must they have noticed it when this recurrence coincided with the return of the rainy season, or of some other annual meteorological phenomenon, like the bursting of the monsoon or the Nile inundation. Thus, even in the tropics, and before the coming on of the glacial epoch, men or the ancestors of men (one cannot draw precise lines here) must probably have observed a certain rough relation between the months and the vegetative cycles; after so many moons, about say thirteen, the yams, or the mangoes, or the grains are ripe again. These organic years, I take it, must have been noticed before the astronomical ones. For it is now beginning to be more and more believed that man is of pre-glacial origin; and even if something worth calling a man were not, then at least man's pre-human ancestors go back far into the tertiary period. Only later would men begin to note that some thirteen moons, and the recurrence of a food-stuff, concurred with a particular solar season.

Indeed, if one comes to think of it, how much even now do any of us, save the most scientific, mean by the year, beyond the visible change of summer and winter? What we are thinking of is the leafless trees, the ice and snow, the green grass in spring,

the flowers and warm days in summer, not the abstract astronomical fact of the earth's revolution round the sun, or the due succession of the signs of the zodiac. It is that visible organic year that must have counted most with man from the first; though no doubt its meaning and reality are much more vividly present since the coming on of the glacial epoch, and the more so in proportion as we live nearer to the north or south pole; while at the equator the year is to the last a much more inconspicuous period—a largely artificial mode of reckoning.

Still, from the very first, there was one element of diversity in the year which must have struck all men, in the temperate and frigid zones at least, perhaps even in a certain way in the tropics. I mean, the varying length of the day, always perceptible in the frigid and temperate zones; for as soon as men in these regions began to think and to observe at all, they must have noticed that the days increased in their summer, and lessened in their winter; and they must have learned to correlate this waxing and waning of the day with the appearance or abundance of certain fruits, seeds, birds, fishes, game, roots and other food-stuffs. It is at least certain that all the world over men do now celebrate the solstices and the equinoxes as special feasts; and the close similarity in most such celebrations leads one to suspect that the custom has been handed down from the very remote time when the human family was still a single continuous body.

In the tropics, it is true, the days vary so little that this difference in itself is not likely to have struck primæval man. But there, another point would come in—the annual movement of the sun overhead from south to north and *vice versâ*; and though this would be less directly important to human life than in temperate regions, it would still be indirectly important. It would bring the rain with it. In Europe, of course, and in temperate America, we can see at once that the return of the sun northward must always have meant spring, the increase of food-stuffs, the promise of corn or maize, the suggestion of harvest; and we can therefore understand why the midwinter feast, when the sun after his long journey south begins to move visibly north again, should have been both in pagan and Christian times the great festival of rejoicing for the men of the north temperate region. Day by day they saw the sun recede and the cold deepen; at last, one evening, he sets a little nearer, and they know that he has not deserted them for ever. Similarly, the

promise made at Yule begins to be realised at that other great feast of the spring equinox, which we still call in England by its ancient heathen title of Easter; the day by that time has got the better of the night, and 'the sun dances on Easter Sunday' in commemoration of his completed victory over the combined powers of winter and darkness. In the tropics, on the other hand, the connection is less clear; but even here the shifting of the sun's apparent place is closely correlated with the shifting of the rain-zone; and therefore it would not be long (after man was man) before tropical savages began to perceive a constant relation between the movements of the sun to north or south, and the occurrence of the fertilising rainy season. We must remember that savages, with their improvident habits, are much more dependent upon rain than we are, and that magical ceremonies for breaking up a drought are among their commonest and most universally diffused superstitions.

On the whole, then, before the coming on of the glacial epoch, we may be pretty sure that plants and animals on the one hand had learnt organically and automatically to recognise the existence of the year and to adapt themselves to it; and that men or the progenitors of men on the other hand had also learned to correlate the recurrent seasons of food supply with the movements of the sun, though nothing equivalent to winter and summer as we know them to-day existed as yet on any part of our planet. I say advisedly 'on any part of our planet,' because even near the pole itself remains of a sub-tropical vegetation in tertiary times have been amply indicated. Nevertheless, in all parts of the world then, as in the tropics now, we may gather that plants and animals ran through annual cycles—that the year, as I have put it, was organically recognised. Trees had their time to sprout, to bud, to flower, to fruit, to seed, to shed their leaves (in the evergreen way); birds had their time to nest and hatch out their young; insects had their fixed periods for laying, for larval life, for assuming the chrysalis form, for becoming winged beetles or bees or butterflies. In one word, the year is a terrestrial reality, not merely an astronomical fact, in the tropics now; it was a terrestrial reality over the whole planet in the tertiary period. But it was hardly more marked, apparently, into distinct seasons that it is marked to-day in the equatorial region. Rainfall and drought must have had more to do in determining the annual cycles than winter and summer.

From all this it must result that the conception of the year as an epoch at all (save for advanced astronomy) is almost or entirely



due to that tilt of the earth's axis which causes the seasons—dry or wet, cold or hot. Without the seasons, in one form or other, we might have been ages longer in discovering the fact that the earth moved round the sun, and that some 365 days (I omit those important fractions) were needed for its revolution. Certainly, without the seasons, at least to the extent that they occur in the tropics, plant and animal life could hardly have assumed its fixed annual cycles, nor could early men have caught at the idea of the year at all as a period of time, a unit of measurement.

Before the glacial epoch, in particular, the discovery of the year, organically or consciously, must have been much more difficult than it is now in high latitudes. It must have been almost as difficult in what are now the temperate zones as it is to-day in the tropics. Far north or south, of course, the length of the day would tell; and within the arctic and antarctic circles the long night would form an unmistakable feature. But if the plane of the equator had always found itself vertical to the sun, there could have been no recognition of the year at all, either organic or conscious. In other words, from the point of view of organic life, the year does not mean the revolution of the earth round the sun: it means the apparent northward and southward movement of the sun on either side of the equator; it means the seasons, whether recognised as winter and summer, or as dry and wet periods. That is really the year as man knows it, as plants and animals have always known it.

With the coming on of the great cold spell, however, the importance of the seasons in the temperate and frigid zones, perhaps also even in the tropics, became much more marked. I will not go here into the suggested reasons for that vast revolution, perhaps the greatest our planet has ever suffered. Most physicists now accept more or less the theory put forward with great ingenuity by Mr. Croll, which sets it down to a period of extreme eccentricity in the earth's orbit; but some weight must also be allowed, as Mr. Alfred Russel Wallace has clearly shown, to the local arrangement of land and water on the globe at the time of its origin, as well as to the occurrence of mountain ranges just then at the poles, and to other purely terrestrial causes. Never before, in all probability, had the poles been occupied by great glacier-clad mountains. It seems most likely, indeed, that we are now practically at the end of the glacial epoch, and that if only we could once get rid of the polar ice-caps, which keep a stock of chilliness always laid on (I speak the quite comprehensible



language of everyday life), we might recur forthwith to the warm and almost imperceptible winters of the pre-glacial period. But, as things stand, the stock of ice at the poles never gets melted away in the existing northern or southern summer; fresh ice accumulates on top of the old mass with each winter; prevailing winds, blowing over this ice, chill regions lying much further towards the tropics; icebergs detach themselves and float off, thus lowering the temperature of the sea in the middle zones; arctic or antarctic currents spread round the coasts and absorb the solar heat in enormous quantities. We have only to remember the trenchant difference in England between a parching cold east wind and a mild sou-wester to realise what an immense part these polar ice-caps and frozen highlands play in the production of our existing winter. Alps, Pyrenees, Himalayas, Rocky Mountains, further assist in the same direction.

On the other hand, currents in the sea may cut either way; the Gulf Stream makes England warm, while the Arctic Current makes Labrador, much further south, practically uninhabitable.

Ever since the glacial epoch, therefore, it has been quite easy for man in the temperate and frigid zones to recognise the year as a natural reality. The annual cycles of heat and cold are far too marked to be overlooked by anybody. Organically, they made themselves felt at once by extraordinary changes induced in the fauna and flora. Before the steady advance of the annual cold wave, vegetation had perforce to alter its ways. The large-leaved evergreens went out altogether in frigid and high temperate regions; deciduous trees, or needle-leaved types like the pines and firs, took the place of the luxuriant miocene foliage in Europe and North America. Every autumn, the larger number of trees and shrubs learned to shed their leaves all together; every spring they came out anew in fresh green and in masses of blossom. Similarly with animals. Birds learned to migrate, or to accommodate themselves to the winter; insects learned to hibernate in the egg or the cocoon; pigs fattened themselves on mast against the frozen time; moles slept over winter; squirrels hoarded nuts for a store to bridge over heavy frosts; frogs retired to the warmer mud in the depths of ponds; adders coiled themselves in holes and dozed away the cold season. Innumerable adaptations sprang up at once, those species or individuals which failed to meet the new conditions perishing in the struggle. In proportion as we recede from the tropics, the more marked do the annual cycles of life thus induced become, many species practically ceasing to exist as such

for several months of the year, and being only potentially represented by eggs, germs, or seeds, and sometimes by dormant pregnant females.

At the same time, while the cause of the seasons as a whole is the obliquity of the earth's axis, with the resulting inclination of either pole toward the sun alternately, we must not forget that the seasons and the climate in each particular country depend in part upon many minor contributory causes. It is not merely nearness to or distance from the equator that counts; we have to consider also relative distribution of land and water, elevation, prevalent winds, exposure, condensation, and many other elements of a complex problem. In Ecuador, for example, whose very name means the equator, the plain is always in scorching summer, the mountains are always in perpetual spring. The monsoons, again, produce in other countries some curious results: they depend themselves on the change of relative temperature in sea and land at different seasons; and they break upon the Himalayas with this odd and unexpected effect, that the snow line on the southern side of that vast range goes very far down, owing to the immense rainfall (or rather snowfall) and the consequent spread of snow-fields and glaciers; while on the northern side it descends but a very little way, owing to the extreme desert drought and the great summer heat of the central Asiatic tableland. We have thus the apparent paradox that millions of Tibetans occupy towns and cultivate farms to the north at a height from three to four thousand feet above the snow line on the southern slope of the same mountains.

Looking at the matter broadly, then, and taking for granted the now generally accepted modern view that the great oceans and great continents have been relatively fixed (though liable to minor fluctuations and variations of outline) throughout all geological time, and that the earth's crust has not shifted from pole to equator or *vice versâ*, we arrive at last at the following probable conclusions. There have always been seasons more or less marked, and these have been more or less organically answered by corresponding changes or cycles of change in plants and animals. Rain and drought have in many cases more to do with such changes than variations of temperature. The seasons, again, are less marked in the tropics than in temperate and circumpolar climates. Nevertheless, even near the equator, they exert and have always exerted certain organic influences—have resulted in annual cycles the life of species. Even before the coming on

of the glacial epoch, the seasons were probably somewhat more marked in the temperate and polar regions than in the tropics, the longer day in summer and the greater directness of impact of the rays making the summer months always warmer. But for various reasons, among which we may presumably rank the absence in early ages of high land at the poles and of an accumulated polar ice-cap, together with the existence of warm sea currents from the tropics to the poles, the winters of pre-glacial ages seem to have been relatively mild, perhaps (if we may judge by the types of plant-life) milder than those of South Carolina and Georgia in our own period. No cold winds of importance seem then to have blown with blighting effect from glaciated or snow-clad districts. (Mars in our own time appears to enjoy winters somewhat of this character, though a little colder, with a temporary snow-cap.) The seasons as we know them in temperate and arctic climates, however, seem to be largely the result of the glacial epoch, and its persistent legacy the arctic and antarctic ice-caps. If we could once manage to get rid of those, it is possible that our planet might again enjoy in all its zones the mild and genial pre-glacial winters.

These are rough notes, I know; mere adumbrations of a probable truth: but adequately to develop the subject would require a very big volume. My object here is simply to suggest that in many inquiries, both into human and animal or vegetable life, we must never take the existence of seasons as we know them for granted, except in very recent times. The year, for organic beings, means essentially the seasons; and the seasons may mean and have meant many separate things, as time and place vary—heat and cold, food and scarcity, foliage and leaflessness, drought and wet; longer or shorter days, the midnight sun and the winter darkness; hibernation and wakefulness; the egg, the cocoon, the seed, the plant, the flower, the fruit; dormancy or vitality. According as human life started at the poles or the equator, for instance, it would view in the beginning many things differently. All I wish to point out now is merely this, that we must bear such possibilities ever in mind; and that we must never take it for granted in any problem, human or biological, that the seasons were always just what we know them, or that the year to any organic being meant anything more than the seasonal cycle then and there prevalent.

GRANT ALLEN.

## *At the Sign of the Ship.*

MY frank confession that I keep a wastepaper-basket for presentation copies of poems by minstrels personally unknown to me has aroused mixed feelings. One result is that minor poets write from a variety of places, saying that they have read the cruel intelligence in the *Bungay Mail*, and that, of course, I must make an exception for *them*. They then send poems, both in print and MS. Next, ladies write letters beginning 'Monster!' (not at all as Blanche Amory used the phrase), and reminding me of the fate of Keats, and how he choked on his first crust of bread after reading a cruel *critique* in the *Edinburgh Review*. They have found my remarks in *The Lady of Leisure*. Somehow the public so dearly love the second-hand that they never read anything where it appeared first; they have always seen, elsewhere, an article about an article about an article, about a book on this or that, and so on. Then they sit down and let fly at the author of the book.

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*Eh bien*, in spite of the wastepaper-basket, I am not really a Nero. The repository alluded to is, however, the best place for much volunteered minstrelsy. Mr. Matthew Arnold used to give such offerings to the porter at his club, who must have possessed a queer rather than a valuable collection. Mr. Browning was a great butt of poets; he used to answer them with his unfailing urbanity. I remember his story of a poet who kept returning to the charge, and asking Mr. Browning to 'place' him among contemporaries. 'I may not, as yet, be precisely a rival of yourself, sir,' he wrote, 'but, at all events, I *do* think I am better than Coventry Patmore or Austin Dobson.' In the same way, as we recently learned, Mr. Patmore confessedly preferred his own *Tamworth Church* (I think that was the name) to fifty such poems as *Maud*. The poet is a ticklish creature to handle. 'It may be that only silence suiteth best.'

For my part, I regard the relations between a scribbler like the present monster and the enthusiastic public as a kind of game which ought to be played with good-humour. The strangers who send down so many covers of poetry books and bad novels want to get praise in a letter (which, as we know, some of them quote in print) or desire a favourable review. If they succeed, the man they bowl at is caught out or stumped. But if he plays their deliveries neatly away into the wastepaper-basket, it is he who scores—I take it for granted that the said deliveries are not on the spot.

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Conscience whispers that I have not played away many good and deserving length balls in this ignominious manner. I think that *Admirals All* appeared first in LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE (however, that goes to the Editor's credit), and I am delighted to see that the public appreciates Mr. Newbolt's Muse. We all like to 'discover' poets; critics 'discover' a fresh poet once a month. I doubt if Mr. Kipling's *Departmental Ditties* were reviewed in England anywhere before they were noticed in the *Ship*, and I wish that the person who has my copy of the odd-shaped first edition would return it. Still, the enormous majority of poetry books is wholly worthless, except that the writing of them pleases the author as much as if he were a Milton or a Shelley. That is no reason why he should invade the peaceful homes of perfect strangers with his rhymes. The recipient will retort—

*Cet animal est très méchant,  
Quand on l'attaque il se défend.*

\* \* \*

The craze for writing letters to total strangers is not a good humour. The Brontës indulged in it greatly, but as a rule young people of sense and taste do not pester strangers. Not to answer, or to answer through an amanuensis, is, I think, a legitimate part of the defensive game. I think so because, after answering what seemed a natural question by a stranger, I have found that autograph hunting was the real object in view. Probably most writers owe much to strangers who kindly send information, perhaps from places as remote as Madagascar. One is only too happy to hear from such travellers and observers, but the autograph trap is another affair, or the advertisement trap. On these principles the game is played.

New poetry seems to be in high esteem at this moment, and Mr. Stephen Phillips is to be congratulated on a sudden leap into the position of the latest discovered minstrel. I have not enjoyed the opportunity of seeing his new book, but would venture to play the part of the slave at the Roman triumph. Many new poets have I seen crowned in the city, but their laurels are already sere, while probably fresh journalistic bays are even now being twined for some yet more recent 'supreme head of song,' as Amurath to Amurath succeeds. Mr. Phillips cannot reckon on three years' reign, unless somebody discovers—(1) that he is a plagiarist (say, from Sir Lewis Morris), (2) that he is improper, (3) that he is unintelligible. Mr. Swinburne was called improper (not absolutely without a shadow of plausibility); Mr. Rossetti was called improper; Longfellow was called a plagiarist (by Poe); Tennyson and Browning were unintelligible. The showers of stones ought, by all precedent, to arrive before the crowns of laurels.

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It is not safe to decide on the authorship of an unsigned work by evidence of style. I believe that I have discovered an unsigned work to be by Mr. John Knox, but I may be wrong, and this portentous discovery must be announced and defended in another place. But one is encouraged by a recent circumstance. Some years ago I went into a man's rooms, who handed me a new book and said, 'Who is your friend?' The work, entitled *The Silver Domino*, was dedicated to my unworthy self, but, as investigation proved, not in a loving spirit. I read a few pages, and said that I attributed the scathing satire to the frolic genius of a lady who shrinks from fame, and whom I shall therefore call Miss Z. It might be invidious to state the indications which led me to form this provisional hypothesis. The author, speaking in the first person, announced that she was a woman; she was very angry with critics (especially with those who never reviewed her); and she had certain literary preferences not very usual. These led criticism to Miss Z.

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The author, in a new edition, published a letter to herself from Lord Tennyson; and lately the same letter, with a few verbal changes, was again published, as an epistle to Miss Z. from Lord Tennyson. An acute critic in *The Daily Mail* therefore produced the theory that, as Miss Z. denies (so he affirms)



the authorship of *The Silver Domino*, Lord Tennyson's epistle must have been a formula which he sent to literary correspondents at large. That view is barely possible. Again, the author of *The Silver Domino* may have somehow got hold of a real letter of the Laureate's to Miss Z. and impudently published it as a letter to herself. Or, finally, Miss Z. may not be absolutely unconcerned in the authorship of the popular satire in question, any more than Southey was absolutely unconcerned in the authorship of *The Doctor*. The future historian of literature will have to unravel this important tangle. So far, my conjecture seems to have been on the fringes of success, if not actually successful, which gives one the better hope in the case of the unsigned work in which I seem to discern the hand of the great Reformer. I trust there is nothing malignant in these observations. Nobody much minds being satirised, though there are exceptions; and if Addison was Atticus he could not have enjoyed the satire of Pope—unless, indeed, he thought it so well done that he could overlook the rather unkind character of the sentiments. Lord Fanny and Lady Mary tried to hit back, not with success. Yet it must have been easy to write things that would sting Pope, and to write them better than Lord Fanny did. Satire has gone out; not that it is not 'easy writing,' but because nobody cares. We know how unimportant we are, and that, though the public may come to see us in the pillory to-day, to-morrow the public has forgotten all about us and our undignified sufferings.

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A writer in the *St. James's Gazette* asks if I had seen Mr. Thackeray's letter to the Duke of Devonshire, about the characters in *Vanity Fair*, before I wrote a certain interview between Becky and the Bishop of Barchester? (*Letters from Old Friends*.) No, I had not seen Thackeray's letter before I saw it in LONGMAN'S MAGAZINE for February. But I *had* read the last chapter of *Vanity Fair*, where Thackeray says much the same things as he does in his letter to the Duke. Does nobody now read *Vanity Fair*? Is there no picture of Becky at a bazaar of charity? Is Emmy not 'scuttling away'? I quote from memory.

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Some other learned critic objects to Becky being 'crinolined.' He appears to think that crinoline means those queer frames on which the robes of Leech's ladies are so widely distended—long after



*Vanity Fair* was published. What does he think 'crinoline' is derived from? The following note by Mr. W. H. Peet will give him the information.

‘CRINOLINE.

‘The first use of the word quoted in the *New English Dictionary* is from the *World of Fashion*, August 1830. It there refers to a new material made of horsehair or stiff like horsehair (*crinis*). It was originally used for bonnets, but seems subsequently to have been adopted for dresses, and gave a stiff, inflated appearance to them. The reference in Thackeray’s letter, and in the *Snob Papers*, Chapters XXV. and XXXII., are to the use of this material for stiffening dresses, and not to the skeleton underwear crinoline in vogue ten years later, though the effect was similar.’

\* \* \*

If anyone reads *Esmond* now, I would respectfully call his attention to an article styled ‘Queen Oglethorpe’ in *Blackwood* for February. The historical discoveries are not due to A. L., one of the two authors, but to A. S., and they correct Thackeray’s account of ‘the best of men and kings,’ also of Queen Oglethorpe, and explain why Prince Charles haunts, or used to haunt, the Meath Home for Incurables.

\* \* \*

In discussing the divining rod, I asked lately for cases in which people were really sensitive to the presence of cats, the said cats not being known to be present by sight, hearing, touch, or smell. A lady sends what follows:—

‘Sir,—I have only to-day seen LONGMAN’S MAGAZINE for November, 1897. In it are these words: “Some people say that they know, through none of the ordinary channels of sensation, when a cat is in the room. I would gladly see experiments made in this faculty, which is usually taken for granted on the word of the patient.”

‘I think from this that two instances which occurred before my own eyes may be interesting to you.

‘It was about the year 1869, and I was living at Rugby. We had two beautiful white Persian cats, one attached to me, the other to my husband; Thomas lived on the back of his chair at meals and shared his cold bath every morning, while Kawmets was equally devoted to me.

'These cats always came to meals, being established on the backs of the chairs before we entered the room, and they let us eat enough to satisfy the first requirements of hunger, and then, with much gentleness, directed the fork over the shoulder to their own mouths. One day we expected some friends to lunch with us, and I knew that one gentleman "objected to cats." I therefore told the maid to be sure to shut them up in their own room, and not allow them to come out till our guests were gone. This gentleman sat at my right hand. All went well till pudding-time, when I noticed that he looked ill, and breathed with difficulty, as if he was suffering from asthma or a very bad cold. I asked what was amiss, and he replied that he did not know, adding: "I should have said that there were cats in the room, as the presence of a cat has a strange effect on me." I said with all honesty that there were none, and he believed me, but, nevertheless, he speedily became so bad that he was about to leave the room with my husband, to see if fresh air would revive him, when out stalked, from under a sofa in the far corner of the room, Mr. Thomas, looking majestic, as if he felt deserving of all praise for his silence; after him came the lesser, but still more immaculate Kawmets, and the mystery was explained.

'We were engaged to meet this same friend at dinner that evening, but when we arrived our hostess said: "Mr. — is in bed with asthma, thanks to your nasty cats."

'The second occasion was much the same.

'I was then at Newcastle-under-Lyme, and a lady, whom I knew but slightly, was calling on me. After a few minutes she said: "I feel so faint. May I go into the garden?" and the friend with whom she was staying added, "Is there a cat in the room? They affect her in this way." Warned by past experience, I looked at once, and found a soft grey angora on the sofa under the big cushion. He was expelled and she soon recovered, but her complexion was ashy white when she complained of feeling ill.'

\* \* \*

Some people suffer from asthma if they drive in an open carriage, and attribute the malady to the smell of the horses. But cats are not horses, any more than fleas are lobsters. As to the divining rod, Renan in later editions of his *Peuple d'Israël* says that the Jews, by aid of a divining rod, discovered water at Beer. But the Bible only tells us that the well was 'dug with staves.' This sounds unlikely, *à priori*; but I now find that

the Bushmen and Namaquas actually dig wells with pointed sticks in the desert, so why not the Israelites? The facts are in Alexander's *Journey*, written about 1830. Renan wanted to account for Moses striking the rock with a rod, and the consequent upflow of water. He therefore decided that when the Bible says a well was 'dug with staves' it means 'was discovered by a divining rod,' which fact was afterwards mythically converted into 'was knocked out of a rock by a rod.' But there is not a word about a divining rod in the case. The well at Beer was dug with staves, as the Namaquas dig. And that is how Biblical criticism is worked.

\* \* \*

Not long ago we referred to a capital old poaching ballad in Sir Herbert Maxwell's *Memories of the Months*. A correspondent sends this other example of rural minstrelsy and the Robin Hood spirit before poaching became a branch of business. He heard it sung as long ago as 1826, and he adds the air, which also seems to fit Sir Herbert's song.

\* \* \*

#### POACHER'S SONG.

Bartlemy woods in Nottinghamshire,  
Fol de rol lol de rol de riddle lol,  
Bartlemy woods at this time of the year,  
Fol de rol lol de lay.

The very first night we had bad luck,  
Fol de rol lol, etc.,  
For one of my very best dogs got shot,  
Fol de rol, etc.,  
For he came to me both bloody and lame,  
So sorry were I to see the same,  
For he were not able to follow the game,  
Whack! Fol de rol, etc.

I examined his wounds and I found them slight,  
Fol de rol, etc.,  
Some keeper has done this out of spite,  
Fol de rol, etc.;  
I'll take my pikestaff in my hand,  
And I'll search all the woods till I find the man,  
And I'll tan his old jacket right well if I can,  
Whack! Fol de rol, etc.

I searched the woods and groves all night,  
 Fol de rol, etc. ;  
 I searched the woods until daylight,  
 Fol de rol, etc.,  
 But the very first thing that ever I found  
 It was a fat buck lying dead on the ground,  
 My dog I am sure gave him his death wound,  
 Fol de rol, etc.

My dogs they know me by my note,  
 Fol de rol, etc.,  
 So I out with my knife and I cut the buck's throat,  
 Fol de rol, etc. ;  
 And if you had seen them you'd have laughed till you'd crack  
 To see my man Jack with the buck on his back,  
 For he carried it home like a Yorkshireman's pack,  
 Whack ! Fol de rol, etc.

\* . \*

Is deer-driving a common thing in the Highlands ? So Ouida asserts in *The Badminton Magazine*. Personally, I never came across a deer drive: it has always been stalking, a most laborious form of sport, and I have met many men who liked all of it, except shooting the stag. However, there are forests and forests, and driving may be practised where I have not been. If so, it is the reverse of modern. The Highland chief of last century did not stalk; he sent a keeper with gillies out to get a deer for the house. When the chief wanted sport, he had a deer-drive.

Ouida, or the editor of *The Badminton Magazine*, will see the facts in Burt's *Letters*, vol. ii. p. 70, edition of 1822. Yet one finds indignant Highland authors maintaining that deer-drives are a Sassenach innovation ! The date of Burt's *Letters* is 1730, or thereabouts; certainly before the Forty-five. We know, of course, that driving was the regular old Highland fashion. See Taylor the water-poet, and

We'll quell the stubborn mountaineer,  
 As their Tinchel quells the game,  
 They come as fast as forest deer,  
 We'll drive them back as tame.

Scott I cite, *more suo*, from memory, and I hope there are not more than four errors in the quotation.

\* . \*

Pursuing Mr. Stanley Weyman's novel, *The Castle Inn*, up and down the *Cornhill Magazine* (for the sheets had been sewn together in a rich confusion) my own name caught my eye. It was not in *The Castle Inn*, but in that *Private Diary* which might be left lying about unlocked without tempting a Curious Impertinent to peep. The diarist had seen, he says, a book with 'Wordsworth, by A. Lang' on the title-page, which gave him an opening for his gentle fun. The title should have been 'Selections from the Poems of Wordsworth, by Wordsworth. The Selections selected by A. Lang;' and then the diarist would not have been perplexed. The meaning would have been plain to 'the most excruciatingly feeble mind.'

\* \* \*

This diarist is full of matter. He observes: 'The murder of Mr. Terriss, the popular actor in melodrama, just at the door of his theatre, has struck everybody with peculiar horror.' This was well worth saying in itself, even if it did not introduce an apposite quotation about an actor who, after playing the part of Death, happened to expire on the way to his dressing-room. I don't know how the diarist would reply to the question put by Sambo to Will, in the *Virginians*, 'Wool you like any more?' But as the honest gentleman tells us, with obvious accuracy, that he is approaching his golden-wedding day, I would not willingly mar that festival, and vex his 'aged aunt,' by insulting the inevitable weaknesses of old age.

\* \* \*

That the death of the author of *Alice in Wonderland* must be greatly regretted is an example of the obvious, worthy of my ingenious contemporary. Nobody since Dickens has given us so many popular sayings and left his mark so firmly in common speech as Mr. Lewis Carroll. How well one remembers, after more than thirty years, the happy surprise which *Alice* brought! the entire novelty of the amiable nonsense! No one could imitate it, though many still try the impossible feat. Probably the same author's remarks on the new belfry of his college are now very 'scarce,' like the books in Mr. Pearson's new catalogue. One reads it as one looks into the windows of Bond Street shops where the enamels and miniatures are. For the original MS. of *Endymion* I certainly would not pay 1,500*l.*, even with *Lamia* thrown in. But how astonished Christopher North would be at the price! A first edition of a novel of Hawthorne's for a guinea seems absurdly cheap;

what are American collectors about—buying Mr. Kipling's early tracts for hundreds of dollars and neglecting a native author of considerable merit? Here is a book from the library of Henry VIII., apparently a present from Francis I., in the most beautiful binding. I am always sorry for Henry VIII., a man of a great disappointment. Through all his later years Henry's desire was to kidnap somebody. If they were killed in the attempt, *tant mieux*; but kidnapping was his desire. He tried to trepan

The Bishop of Aberdeen,  
The Archbishop of St. Andrews,  
James V. (on several occasions),  
Mary Stuart,  
Cardinal Beaton,  
The Emperor,  
Arran,  
Angus,  
Sir George Douglas,

and several other people. He was always disappointed, but a gleam of success brightened the dying hours of this amateur. He got Cardinal Beaton assassinated and the murderers also caught Arran's eldest son. Henry thought that his lucky hour had sounded, but envious Death seized him before he could secure his prey. He never seems to have really kidnapped anyone of any importance, and he died a disappointed man. There were gleams of humour in Henry, as when, writing to his sister about her third husband, Lord Methuen, the reforming king called that nobleman 'Lord Muffin.' I do not remember whether Mr. Froude has recorded the royal jest in his panegyric on Henry VIII. However, the witticism is in the State Papers.

ANDREW LANG.




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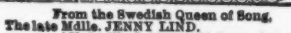
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